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POETRY & LIFE

THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS  
AND THEIR POETRY

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THE  
ELIZABETHAN  
LYRISTS AND  
THEIR POETRY

BY  
AMY CRUSE

Editor of "A Treasury of Elizabethan Lyric"  
Author of "English Literature through the Ages" etc.



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## GENERAL PREFACE

**A** GLANCE through the pages of this little book will suffice to disclose the general plan of the series of which it forms a part. Only a few words of explanation, therefore, will be necessary.

The point of departure is the undeniable fact that with the vast majority of young students of literature a living interest in the work of any poet can best be aroused, and an intelligent appreciation of it secured, when it is immediately associated with the character and career of the poet himself. The cases are indeed few and far between in which much fresh light will not be thrown upon a poem by some knowledge of the personality of the writer, while it will often be found that the most direct—perhaps even the only—way to the heart of its meaning lies through a consideration of the circumstances in which it had its birth. The purely æsthetic critic may possibly object that a poem should be regarded simply as a self-contained and detached piece of art, having no personal affiliations or bearings. Of the validity of this as an abstract principle nothing need now be said. The fact remains that, in the earlier stages of study at any rate, poetry is most valued and loved when it is made to seem most human and vital; and the human and vital interest of poetry can be most surely brought home to the reader by the biographical method of interpretation.

## GENERAL PREFACE

This is to some extent recognized by writers of histories and text-books of literature, and by editors of selections from the works of our poets ; for place is always given by them to a certain amount of biographical material. But in the histories and text-books the biography of a given writer stands by itself, and his work has to be sought elsewhere, the student being left to make the connexion for himself ; while even in our current editions of selections there is little systematic attempt to link biography, step by step, with production.

This brings us at once to the chief purpose of the present series. In this, biography and production will be considered together and in intimate association. In other words, an endeavour will be made to interest the reader in the lives and personalities of the poets dealt with, and at the same time to use biography as an introduction and key to their writings.

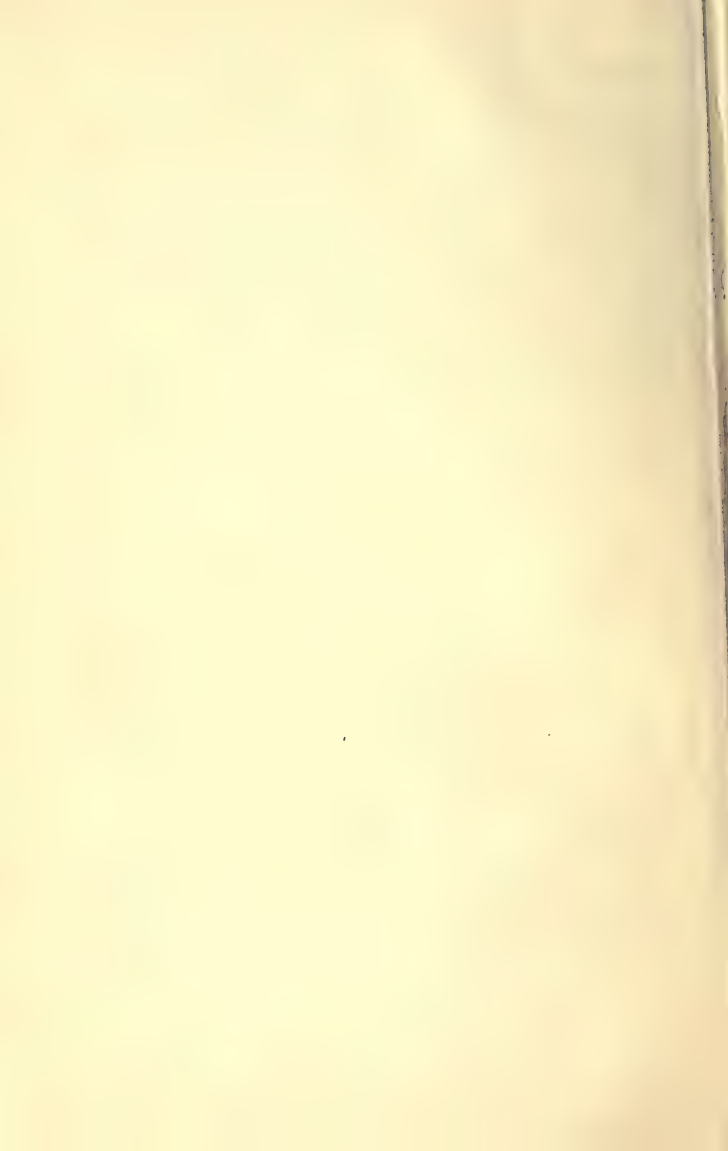
Each volume will therefore contain the life-story of the poet who forms its subject. In this, attention will be specially directed to his personality as it expressed itself in his poetry, and to the influences and conditions which counted most as formative factors in the growth of his genius. This biographical study will be used as a setting for a selection, as large as space will permit, of his representative poems. Such poems, where possible, will be reproduced in full, and care will be taken to bring out their connexion with his character, his circumstances, and the movement of his mind. Then, in

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addition, so much more general literary criticism will be incorporated as may seem to be needed to supplement the biographical material, and to exhibit both the essential qualities and the historical importance of his work.

It is believed that the plan thus pursued is substantially in the nature of a new departure, and that the volumes of this series, constituting as they will an introduction to the study of some of our greatest poets, will be found useful to teachers and students of literature, and no less to the general lover of English poetry.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON



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# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

**T**HERE is no period in English history which has a better claim to be distinguished by a special title than that which is commonly known as the Elizabethan age. It is definitely marked off from the periods which precede and follow it by the possession of certain striking and characteristic qualities. These qualities are, broadly speaking, quite general. They show themselves in the nation at large and in individuals, in the religion, the literature, the social life, even in the dress of the day. They are evident in the attitude of the people toward their Queen and toward her enemies. They serve to drive men out to the uttermost parts of the earth, and to fix their affections with passionate intensity upon their English homes. So that in studying any one of the elements which make up the national life of that period it is necessary to begin with some consideration of these general characteristics. This is especially necessary with regard to the lyric poetry of the period ; for records of the lives of the individuals concerned are sometimes scanty or non-existent, and in estimating the influence of life upon work the worker must in many cases be considered rather as a typical product of his time than as a distinct personality.

One way in which we may gain some idea of the manner of man the Elizabethan was and how

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he was influenced by the circumstances of his age is by contrasting the outlook on life of a man born about the middle of the fifteenth century with that of his great-grandfather born about a hundred years before. The difference marks the difference between mediæval and modern Europe.

The outlook of the mediæval man was extraordinarily circumscribed. For him the world meant England and the neighbouring countries of Western Europe. Of the East with its barbarous Turks and infidel Saracens, of ancient Egypt and the country of the dark-skinned Moors he had some dim conception ; but he thought of them rather as fabulous regions in the realms of romance than as actual and accessible countries. His intellectual world was even narrower. If he were exceptionally well-educated—a University man and a reader—he knew something of the works of the Fathers of the Church and of the dialectics of the Schoolmen. He had gone through the prescribed four years' course in logic necessary for the degree of B.A., and perhaps had added another four years' study of the seven arts and three philosophies which would enable him to proceed to M.A. But he had applied his knowledge mainly to the consideration of subtle and abstract problems which had done little to enlarge his views of actual life. The ordinary man had none of this academic learning. He had probably read Chaucer and Gower, some of the popular French romances and some old English ballads. He knew the stories from the Old and New Testaments chiefly

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as they had been embodied for him in the miracle plays he had witnessed ; and there were dim tracts in his mind filled with vague and mysterious figures of witch and fairy, which he owed to old folk-tales told around the winter fire. In spiritual matters he had been taught that it was a sin even to think of looking to one side or the other of the fenced-in path which the Church had appointed for him to tread. He had, it would seem, no ardent desire to enlarge the borders of this narrow world ; he probably did not recognize that it was narrow. Wars and tumults were going on all round him, and men were being drawn into struggles for causes with which they had little or no concern. A man had as much as he could do to search for a safe path through the strife and turmoil which everywhere beset him, and had no incentive to explore unfamiliar and dangerous territory.

In the early years of the sixteenth century the light which was beginning to shine all over Europe shed its beams on England. Eager and earnest spirits saw a vision of new worlds which they might enter upon and possess ; but the light faded and the vision died away, hidden by the black clouds of religious and political strife which gathered over the country. The time of deliverance from the straitness of mediæval environment had not yet come.

It came with the accession of Elizabeth. A strong queen whose main aim was to keep her people from strife both at home and abroad sat on the throne. Englishmen drew a deep breath

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and settled down to an unfamiliar security—not the security of knowing that all danger was over, but rather that which came with the assurance that the ruling power was equal to all emergencies. They turned joyfully to receive the impulses of the strong, stirring spirit which, for nearly a hundred years, had been influencing so powerfully the other countries of Europe; and they found to their surprise that it had been working around them and even in them in ways of which they had not been conscious. The impulse given in the reign of Henry VIII, though it had been weakened, had not entirely died out, and it woke into vigorous activity as men began to recognize its value.

Some of the barriers which had hemmed in the mediæval man had gone, others were going. The discovery of America had marvellously extended the boundaries of the world, as the Elizabethan soon began to realize. His own countrymen had visited the new land and had brought back strange tales of its wealth and its wonders; and what was even more convincing, they had brought back rich spoils. Every day came some fresh news. Adventurer followed adventurer, each vieing with the others in the daring of his enterprise, till the Indies, as the new lands were called, became as real and familiar to the men at home as France or Spain had ever been. A miracle had happened; there had been a new Creation, and a new world had appeared. It is hard for us to-day to realize the sense of freedom, of breadth, of opportunity which all this gave to

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the men who lived under Elizabeth. It prompted them to action, it urged them to fresh discoveries, it gave them illimitable visions and unbounded hopes. Nothing seemed impossible to the bold and the daring. Try, venture, experiment, seek new things ; do not be daunted by danger or difficulty, achieve even the impossible. This was the message which had come to the Englishmen of that great age.

The mental horizon had been extended in the same marvellous manner. Great realms of thought, old even as the New Lands were old, yet new and fresh, opened out before the Elizabethan scholar, inviting him to leave the thin and meagre pastures of the Middle Ages for a land rich and fair and delightful. The great literatures of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, rediscovered by the Renaissance of the previous century, were available for his study, and ready to bring to him a new conception of life, new ideals of goodness, happiness and beauty. The young man who, in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth, entered as a student at one of the great Universities, was not obliged, as his ancestor had been, to exercise quick and ardent faculties on subtle metaphysical distinctions and barren theological arguments. It is true that in the actual course of study there had been little change for the better. Of the great reforms instituted by Erasmus and his fellows at the beginning of the century scarcely a trace remained. But a student was not strictly bound down to follow the prescribed course, and the

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stimulus which he gained from contact with the eager and curious crowds which now thronged the Universities drove him forward to seek some true satisfaction of his mental needs.

The spiritual realm had changed and broadened beyond recognition. The strait path had vanished, the fences had been removed, the landmarks obliterated. Beyond lay a great country, full of untrodden ways, dangerous indeed, but none the less fascinating, for the adventurous spirit of the time had penetrated even to matters spiritual. The repeated changes that had taken place in the government of the Church had, in a large measure, destroyed its authority in the eyes of the people, and broken down the old habit of dumb, unquestioning obedience. Speculation was rife. Men held their creeds lightly or earnestly as the case might be, but they brought their intellects to bear upon their beliefs, studying, reasoning, and arguing on what had before admitted of no debate. The old teaching was entirely opposed to the new spirit which was building up the busy, brilliant, daring life of Elizabethan England. The mediæval Church had taught its children to regard the delight in earthly things as a temptation of the Evil One which they must strive to overcome by prayer and self-mortification. But the new teaching—the teaching of the ancient Greeks now brought home to sixteenth-century Englishmen—taught as one of its foremost doctrines the joy of living, the duty of rejoicing in physical and natural beauty and in the full and strenuous

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exertion of the powers of body and mind. The mediæval Church had taught that this present life was nothing, meant only as a time of trial and preparation for the life to come. The new teaching held that life itself was a great and good thing, to be eagerly desired and keenly enjoyed. Without hesitation the bulk of the Elizabethans accepted these new doctrines. As was natural, many pushed them to extremes. The excitement of all these changes produced a kind of intoxication under the influence of which all sorts of extravagances were committed. Recklessness, dissipation, dissoluteness marked and marred the lives of some of the greatest men of the age, and spoiled the work which, had they retained something of the older fashion of self-restraint, they might have accomplished.

In speaking thus of the joyous spirit of the Elizabethan age one does not, of course, mean to represent it as a period of universal happiness. There was probably as much misery then as there has been at any other time. In the same way the Middle Ages are not to be regarded as a period of ascetic gloom ; the mediæval man did not always turn his back on worldly joys ; he was, as far as we know, not a whit more spiritually minded than the Elizabethan. But nevertheless the general spirit of the two periods differed, and differed fundamentally. The ordinary Englishman belonging to the former, even when he enjoyed his revelling and indulgences and had no thought of renouncing them, yet had a feeling that they belonged to the lower part of his

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nature, and were, in a sense, surreptitious. Consequently they were to him morally hurtful ; they were not naturally associated in his mind with fine impulses and generous aspirations. But the Elizabethan proudly proclaimed his belief in the righteousness of pure joy, in the elevating power of happiness, in the freedom which pertained to man of testing to the uttermost the pleasures which the world could offer. This attitude had considerable influence upon the literature of the time. It explains also why some writers whose lives were dissolute, and who seemed to revel in low and degrading forms of pleasure, yet retained a vivid, loving sense of the beauty of simple joys. To them there was no sharp line dividing one kind of joy from another. The wild exhilaration which came from drunkenness and gambling was only another form of the pure delight which clear streams and flower-sprinkled meadows, morning skies, the beauty of children and the affections of home could give. Being reasonable men, they could not fail to see the evil results of prolonged dissipation, and they bewailed the degradation of the life into which they had fallen, often in wildly exaggerated terms. But they showed no sense, as the son of the mediæval Church who preceded and the Puritan who followed them would have done, that the delight in life which had led them into all these excesses was in itself a sin.

It may seem a contradiction, after having spoken of the recklessness and dissipation which was one of the results of the working of the new



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spirit, to say that it produced also a youthful freshness of disposition which made the Elizabethan in many respects a child. Yet so it was. The sense that all things were made new, that life was beginning afresh and everything might be expected, gave that sense of the unbounded and the infinite which is one of the marked characteristics of childhood. In their world, as in the world of the child, miracles happened every day ; yet they did not cease to be wonderful. The most marvellous tales of travellers' adventures or supernatural revelations were received with simple faith, and this by men who could argue shrewdly enough on questions of religion or of politics. Every fresh impulse was followed with that abandon and wholehearted zest which seldom comes when age has taught men to look to the future and have a care of consequences.

Yet, when all these facts have been taken into consideration, the student of Elizabethan life would gain but a one-sided and altogether inadequate conception of the period if he thought of it as one of mere froth and ebullition, of irresponsible light-heartedness and reckless daring. These things were but as the bright glancing waves which gave diversity and sparkle to the surface. Underneath ran the strong currents, and the force which the new spirit of life and energy gave to the nation was largely directed into these. England is, and always has been, by natural temper serious, moral, religious; patriotic, even if her patriotism has sometimes savoured of vain-glory ; home-loving, though

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home may sometimes have stood for personal comforts. The virtues she has placed before her sons and daughters as being specially and typically hers are the virtues of courage, hardihood, endurance. And amidst all the manifestations of the new transforming spirit these older, constant qualities were never lost. More especially were they to be observed in men of high station whose position and responsibilities served to bring serious and weighty matters constantly before them. In these the new and the old working together produced a grave, thoughtful, yet gallant and buoyant spirit which gave us the finest type of English gentleman.

Such was Elizabethan England, and it is easy to see that all the conditions were eminently favourable to the production of great poetry. The mental powers were in a state of high activity, the emotions were strongly stirred, the imagination was excited. In the past there was stimulus and food. "For fifty years the English people had had before its eyes the great vicissitudes that make tragedy. All that could stir men's souls, all that could inflame their hearts or wring them had happened" (Dean Church). In the present there was peace, and consequently time for the assimilation of this material. The future was full of brightest promise and boundless hopes.

We know how this past, present and future, working together, gradually wrought Elizabethan England to that white-hot fervour of poetic energy in which some of the greatest works of

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the world's literature were produced. We think of Shakespeare's plays, of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," of Marlowe and of Ben Jonson. But we do not always remember that if these great masters had never lived the age would still have been a remarkable one in the history of English poetry. The times were prodigal of inspiration. When full measure had been given to the giants there was still enough to make many poets of more ordinary stature. If we put aside the dramatic writings of the time, the mass of poetry which remains to us is still very considerable. Only a small proportion of what was written has, probably, come down to us, but this is enough to serve as a sample of the whole. Some of the verses are almost worthless, being little more than the mechanical efforts of professional rhymesters, who wrote simply to satisfy a public demand. More, however, possess real literary merit, and a considerable portion rise to that higher realm of literature which is reserved for works destined to immortality. In few even of the weaker examples is that indefinable "singing" quality which for want of a better name we may call "tunefulness" entirely absent. The Elizabethans are undoubtedly our great song writers, rivalled only by that group of Scottish poets of whom Burns is the chief. Yet even here there is rivalry without similarity. The difference between the Elizabethan lyrics and those of all other ages is hard to define, yet its existence can be recognized by all who will read them attentively and often, letting them

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sing themselves to the ear and sink into the memory. No fine critical faculty is necessary. They were not written for the scholar but for every man, woman and child saving such as "have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to looke to the Sky of Poetry." Even in Elizabethan times there were some of these, as we gather from Sir Philip Sidney's words in his "Defence of Poesie." But how exceptional these were, and how fully poetry entered into the ordinary life of the day, may be judged from the whimsical curse which he pronounces on these defaulters. "Yet this much curse I must send you, in the behalfe of all Poets, that while you live, you live in love and never find favour in lacking skill of a Sonnet, and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an Epitaph."

### II

**T**HE great outburst of song did not come all at once. A time of preparation was necessary that the new ideas might be assimilated and the new language which was to express them learnt. Men had to take stock of their poetic position and to link their own work to the work which had been done in the immediate past.

Elizabethan poetry in its truest sense began before Elizabeth came to the throne. Its pioneers were Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. Both of these noblemen belonged to

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that period to which reference has already been made, when the stimulus of the Renaissance was first felt in England, and when for a short time it seemed as if the great literary awakening were already at hand. Both were noted figures in the court of Henry VIII. They were young, high-born, handsome and accomplished, holding important positions in the State as well as in the world of literature. They did good service to English poetry by introducing Italian verse-forms (notably the sonnet) and the principles of Italian versification ; also, by giving their verses a personal note they attacked that stilted conventionality which had made so many mediæval poems mere frigid exercises in rhetoric.

Sir Thomas Wyatt was a man of Kent, belonging to an ancient family noted for its faithful adherence to the Lancastrian cause during the troubled period of the Wars of the Roses. Tradition says that in his childhood he was the friend and playfellow of Anne Boleyn, and that throughout her brilliant and tragic career his strong affection for her remained unchanged. It is probable that she is the " Anna " of several of his poems, and the verses " Forget not Yet " are generally supposed to have been addressed to her.

### FORGET NOT YET

Forget not yet the tried intent  
Of such a truth as I have meant ;  
My great travail so gladly spent,  
Forget not yet !

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Forget not yet when first began  
The weary life ye know, since whan  
The suit, the service, none tell can ;  
Forget not yet !

Forget not yet the great assays,  
The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,  
The painful patience in delays !  
Forget not yet !

Forget not ! oh ! forget not this !—  
How long ago hath been, and is,  
The mind that never meant amiss !  
Forget not yet !

Forget not then thine own approved !  
The which so long hath thee so loved ;  
Whose steadfast faith yet never moved !  
Forget not yet !

Wyatt went to Cambridge University, where he took his degree at the age of seventeen. At the court of Henry VIII, where we next hear of him, his striking personal qualities soon procured him advancement. He was sent on important diplomatic missions, and although on the fall of Cromwell in 1540 he was imprisoned on a charge of conspiracy, he was soon released. The short remainder of his life was spent in retirement, and he died in 1542.

Surrey was some twelve years younger than Wyatt, whose disciple in many respects he was. From his earliest youth he held a place at Court and for a time was high in favour with Henry VIII. But his headstrong, impulsive nature made it easy for his enemies to represent

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him to the king as a man dangerous to established rule and engaged in treasonable practices. Henry's jealous, tyrannical nature quickly took alarm. Surrey was charged with aspiring to succeed Henry on the throne, was found guilty, and beheaded 1547. Little is known of his life, but that little, combined with the evidence gathered from his writings, shows him to have been a man of lofty and noble temper, with all a poet's sensitiveness to the pure and lovely things of life. His "Phylida was a Fayer Mayde," and one of his sonnets, are given here.

### PHYLIDA WAS A FAYER MAYDE

Phylida was a fayer mayde,  
And fresh as any flowre :  
Whom Harpalus the herdman prayed  
To be his paramour.

Harpalus and eke Corin  
Were herdman both yfere :  
And Phylida could twist and spin  
And thereto sing full clere.

But Phylida was all to coy  
For Harpalus to winne,  
For Corin was her onely joye,  
Who forst her not a pynne.

How often would she flowers twine,  
How often garlandes make :  
Of couslippes and of colombine  
And all for Corin's sake.

But Corin he had haukes to lure  
And forced more the field :  
Of lovers' lawe he toke no cure  
For once he was begilde.

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Harpalus prevaled nought,  
His labour all was lost :  
For he was fardest from her thought  
And yet he loved her most.

## SPRING

The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.  
The nightingale with feathers new she sings ;  
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.  
Summer is come, for every spray now springs,  
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale ;  
The buck in brake his winter coat he slings ;  
The fishes fleet with new repaired scale ;  
The adder all her slough away she slings ;  
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ;  
The busy bee her honey now she mings ;  
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.

And thus I see among these pleasant things  
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs !

Wyatt and Surrey are the first of the Elizabethan group of high-born poets of whom the supreme example is Sir Philip Sidney. "The Company of Courtly Makers" they were called, "Maker" being in the sixteenth century commonly used for "poet." "The Greekes," said Sidney, in his "Defence of Poesie," "called him a Poet, which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of the word *Poiein*, which is to make : wherein I know not whether by lucke or wisdom, wee Englishmen have mette with the Greekes in calling him a maker." In the age



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of Elizabeth there were many claimants to this "high and incomparable title," though on the majority of them Sidney, jealous for the dignity of poetry, bestowed only that of "paper-blurrers," "poet-apes, not poets." Every gentleman who aspired to be considered a finished courtier wrote verses. The ability to do so was as essential to his reputation as was the ability to dance. This was in part due to the survival of the ideas of chivalry, according to which verse-writing was one of the necessary accomplishments of the perfect knight, in part to the poetic impulse which was working throughout England. This poetic impulse tended to transform the frigid and worthless compositions which had been painfully produced by the knight of chivalry into fluent and ready verses which, though of little actual worth as poetry, were in many cases touched with a lively grace or a musical quality which gave promise of development into something higher. This is the highest praise which can justly be given to most of the lyrics of the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign, judging, as we must necessarily do, by the specimens that have come down to us. That this is only a small part of the whole production seems certain. The Elizabethan poets did not write for posterity, and took no pains to preserve their work. A gentleman of the Court would write a sonnet, which was the name given indifferently to any short lyrical composition; it would perhaps be addressed in strains of exaggerated flattery to

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the Queen, or it would tell of the writer's passion for some lady whose charms would be fully recounted; perhaps it would commemorate some event of the day; or perhaps—and this was a very favourite subject—it would compare the life of the courtier with that of the shepherd and dwell on the delights of quiet rural existence. This poem its author would take with him when next he went to Court. If he were skilled in music he would perhaps set it to an air and sing it to the accompaniment of the lute or the viol, or it would be passed from hand to hand among the brilliant company, while the author received his meed of praise and compliments. Two of these "sonnets" belonging to the early part of the period may be quoted as specimens, one by Sir Thomas Wyatt, one by Lord Vaux, who stood high among the minor song-writers.

### WHAT SHOULD I SAY

What should I say !  
Since Faith is dead,  
And Truth away  
From you is fled ?  
Should I be led  
With doubleness ?  
Nay ! nay ! mistress.

I promised you,  
And you promised me,  
To be as true  
As I would be,  
But since I see  
Your double heart,  
Farewell my part !

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Thought for to take  
'Tis not my mind ;  
But to forsake  
One so unkind ;  
And as I find  
So will I trust ;  
Farewell, unjust.

Can ye say nay,  
But that you said  
That I alway  
Should be obeyed ?  
And thus betrayed  
Or that I wist !  
Farewell, unkist !

*Sir Thomas Wyatt*

## WHAT DEATH, ALAS

What death, alas, maie be compared to this,  
I praie within the maze of my sweete foe :  
And when I would of her but crave a kis,  
Disdaine enforceth her awaie to goe.  
My self I checke : yet do I twiste the twine,  
The pleasure hers, the paine is myne.  
But shall I come nye you ?  
Of force I must flie you.

*Lord Vaux*

The fame of the poem depended upon the manner in which it was received by the audience. If it met with little favour it was forgotten alike by writer and hearers. If it gained high praise it was quoted until its words became familiar in Court circles ; ladies asked permission to copy it in their manuscript books, and musicians desired the honour of setting it to music. So we know that the fame of Shakespeare's " sugred

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sonnets" first spread through the manuscript copies that were handed about among his "private friends."

It was not only at Court that lyrics were being produced. Every gentleman's house had its set of musical instruments, and singing, especially the singing of glees, was common. The general demand for poems created a supply. Then enterprising musicians and booksellers conceived the idea of collecting some of these floating treasures and putting them into saleable form. Thus were compiled the Miscellanies and Song Books which have proved such invaluable store-houses to modern investigators, and have preserved for us a very large proportion of our Elizabethan lyrics. The wide popularity which some of these lyrics attained in their own day may be estimated by the references to them in contemporary literature. Shakespeare, for example, puts a song of Lord Vaux's, "I lothe that I did love," in the mouth of the gravedigger in "Hamlet," and makes Desdemona sing the refrain of a song published anonymously in one of the Miscellanies, 1578.

I lothe that I did love,  
In youth that I thought swete :  
As time requires for my behove  
Me thinkes they are not mete,

For age with stelyng steppes,  
Hath clawed me with his cowche :  
And lusty life away she leapes,  
As there had been none such.

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A pikeax and a spade,  
And eke a shrowdyng shete,  
A house of clay for to be made,  
For such a gest most mete.

Lord Vaux

Willow, willow, willow, singe all of greene willow,  
Sing all of greene willow, shall bee my Garland.

My love, what mislyking in mee do you finde,  
Sing all of greene willow :  
That on such a soddayn, you alter your minde,  
Sing willow, willow willow :  
What cause doth compell you so fickle to bee ?  
Willow willow willow willow :  
In heart which you plighted, most loyall to mee,  
Willow willow willow willow.

Anon

But all these efforts were only the preludings to the great burst of song that was to come. Men were practising, experimenting, singing because they must, but feeling all the time there was a hidden harmony that escaped them. Some master spirit was needed who would give to all the aspirants an ideal at which they could aim, a model that would direct their efforts and show how the highest art could use the material which they so blunderingly manipulated. This model was given in the "Shepherd's Calendar" of Edmund Spenser, published 1580. It struck the keynote to a generation which had been trying for so long to bring its utterances into harmony with the true spirit of poetry. Discords gradually died away as that note rang clear through the country, to be greeted with exultant recognition

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by the waiting singers. The true Elizabethan music began, swelling soon into a sweet full chorus.

## III

**C**HIEF among the "Courtly Makers" stands Sir Philip Sidney. He was the son of Sir Henry Sidney, afterwards Lord Deputy of Ireland, and Lady Mary Dudley, daughter of the Duke of Northumberland and sister to the Earl of Leicester. He was born at Penshurst in November 1555, when the fortunes of the Sidney family had sunk very low. In the August of the previous year the Duke of Northumberland had been beheaded, and, six months later, his son, Lord Guilford Dudley, had, with Lady Jane Grey, met the same fate. The Queen looked coldly on Sir Henry Sidney, and for a time the retirement of his country house seemed safest for him. Here, in the midst of a quiet family life, Philip grew up. Penshurst, as Ben Jonson tells us, is an "ancient pile" not "built to envious show," but joying in "better marks, of soil, of air, of wood, of water." It stands shaded by stately trees, "the broad beech and the chestnut, and that taller tree of which a nut was set at his great birth, where all the muses met." It has "orchard fruit" and "garden flowers," "Fresh as the air, and new as are the hours." Best of all, its walls are "reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan; There's none that dwell about them wish them down." Such was the

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peaceful home of Sidney's childhood. He had two brothers, and one sister—Mary, afterwards Countess of Pembroke, whose strong affection and literary sympathy largely influenced his career. Even in his early years he had a grave dignity of demeanour, as if he already took to heart the troubles which had fallen on the State and on his family. "Of his youth," says Sir Fulke Greville, "I will report no other wonder but this, that though I lived with him and knew him from a child, yet I never knew him other than a man ; with such staidness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity as carried grace and reverence at greater years." Fulke Greville was a distant connection of the Sidneys, who entered Shrewsbury School in November 1562, on the same day as Philip Sidney. The two boys formed a friendship which lasted until Sidney's death. Fulke Greville gave to Sidney a loyal and whole-hearted devotion, recognizing his superiority, and glorying to such a degree in his friendship that when he himself died, forty years after his friend, he desired that the words "Friend to Philip Sidney" might be written on his tomb. He also is one of the "Company of Courtly Makers." His best known verses are those which he wrote in memory of his friend.

In 1568 Sidney passed from Shrewsbury to Oxford. Here he made his second great friendship—that with Edward Dyer, who is the third in the trio of poet friends whom Sidney celebrated at a later date.

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My two and I be met,  
A blessed happy trinity,  
As three most jointly set  
In firmest bond of unity.  
Join hearts and hands, so let it be ;  
Make but one mind in bodies three.

Welcome my two to me,  
The number best beloved ;  
Within the heart you be  
In friendship unremoved.  
Join hearts and hands, so let it be ;  
Make but one mind in bodies three.

Sir Edward Dyer is known chiefly through his one poem, " My mind to me a kingdom is," and that has probably survived mainly because of the arresting quality of its opening line.

## MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS

My mind to me a kingdom is,  
Such present joys therein I find,  
That it excels all other bliss  
That earth affords or grows by kind :  
Though much I want which most would have,  
Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,  
No force to win the victory,  
No wily wit to salve a sore,  
No shape to feed a loving eye ;  
To none of these I yield as thrall :  
For why ? My mind doth serve for all.

I see how plenty surfeits oft,  
And hasty climbers soon do fall ;



# AND THEIR POETRY

I see that those which are aloft  
Mishap doth threaten most of all ;  
They get with toil, they keep with fear ;  
Such cares my mind could never bear.

Content to live, this is my stay ;  
I seek no more than may suffice ;  
I press to bear no haughty sway ;  
Look, what I lack, my mind supplies :  
Lo, thus I triumph like a king,  
Content with that my mind doth bring.

Some have too much, yet still do crave ;  
I little have, and seek no more.  
They are but poor, though much they have,  
And I am rich with little store ;  
They poor, I rich ; they beg, I give ;  
They lack, I leave ; they pine, I live.

I laugh not at another's loss ;  
I grudge not at another's pain ;  
No worldly waves my mind can toss ;  
My state at one doth still remain :  
I fear no foe, I fawn no friend ;  
I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,  
Their wisdom by their rage of will ;  
Their treasure is their only trust ;  
A cloakèd craft their store of skill ;  
But all the pleasure that I find  
Is to maintain a quiet mind.

My wealth is health and perfect ease ;  
My conscience clear my chief defence ;

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I neither seek by bribes to please,  
Nor by deceit to breed offence :  
Thus do I live ; thus will I die ;  
Would all did so as well as I.

In 1571 Sidney left Oxford, and in the next year Elizabeth gave permission to her trusty and well-beloved Philip Sidney Esq. to go out of England into parts beyond the sea . . . to remain for the space of two years immediately following his departure out of the realm, for the attaining the knowledge of foreign languages." The years which he spent abroad are chiefly notable for two incidents which affected his after life and work. He was in Paris on August 24, 1572, the day of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. He was not in danger, for he had taken refuge at the English embassy, but he saw some of the terrible scenes in the streets and felt the shuddering horror which possessed all Paris. That he never forgot this experience his firm attitude in later life with regard to foreign politics goes to prove. From Paris Philip travelled into Germany, and there he met the last of the three men who are held in the remembrance of posterity chiefly because they were his friends. This was Hubert Languet, a Frenchman belonging to the reformed religion, who had lately fled from his country, warned by the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. The " lovely and familiar gravity " of the lad of eighteen won the heart of the learned and experienced Frenchman thirty-six years his senior. A friendship, warm on both sides and almost passionate on that of

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Languet, was formed, and Languet's influence was thenceforth one of the great forces in Philip's life.

The song I sang old Languet had me taught.

Languet the shepherd best swift Ister knew  
For clerkly rede and hating what is naught,  
For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true.  
With his sweet skill my skill-less youth he drew  
To have a feeling taste of Him that sits  
Beyond the Heaven, far more beyond our wits.

(From the "Arcadia.")

In 1575 Philip returned to England and began his Court career under the protection of his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, at that time high in Elizabeth's favour. How he became the brightest ornament of that Court, the darling of the Queen and the idol of the English people, is matter of history. His wit, his accomplishments, his personal beauty and his high connections all had their part in raising him to the height he occupied, but beyond all these there were higher qualities. The attraction of a lofty and noble spirit, joined to a strong and constant power of loving, had, as we have seen, gained for him devoted affection at home, at school, at college, and abroad. It was now exercised in a wider sphere and it did not fail; nor did it fail when campaigns and diplomatic missions extended the sphere to include the Low Countries, France and the German States. Even now, though more than three centuries have passed since his death, the charm of his personality is

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still felt. He is one of those few and memorable characters in history whose personality thrills a later generation not so much because of what they did as of what they were.

It was soon after Sidney's return from his travels on the Continent that he first met Penelope Devereux, daughter of the first Earl of Essex. The idea of a match between the girl of twelve years and the young courtier of twenty-one seems to have been entertained by both fathers. It was apparently so far arranged that intimate friends of the two families openly spoke of it as a likely event. The principals in the matter seem to have been lukewarm. Philip was wholly occupied with his aspirations and ambitions, and Penelope was probably too young to have any very serious thoughts on the subject. The Earl of Essex died in 1576, leaving a memorable message for Philip. "Tell him I sent him nothing, but I wish him well; so well that if God do move their hearts I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son; he is so wise, virtuous and godly. If he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as England ever bred." But Philip was apparently in no hurry to begin his wooing. Perhaps there were money difficulties, for the Sidneys were poor; but it may reasonably be supposed that if Philip's love had been ardent he would have made some effort to take advantage of the arrangement made for him. No such effort seems to have been made, and matters drifted on.

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In the early part of 1580 Philip lost favour with Elizabeth owing to his determined opposition to her proposed marriage with the Duke of Anjou. The Queen would not consent to his constantly repeated petition that he might be given some position of real use and importance abroad, or allowed to join in the adventurous voyages which other noblemen were triumphantly accomplishing. The life at Court, full of petty intrigues, and in which men were dependent for their advancement on the caprices of a jealous, despotic queen, fretted his noble spirit and gave no scope to his lofty ambitions. But Elizabeth, though she resented the daring which emboldened a mere youth to oppose her will, had yet no mind to lose the "brightest jewel of her crown." Sidney was not allowed to leave the country.

Mary Sidney had, in 1576, married the Earl of Pembroke. The affection and sympathy which had marked the relations of the brother and sister in childhood remained as strong as ever. Philip spent as much time as he could at Wilton, the Earl of Pembroke's country seat, and he and his sister worked together at various literary projects. It was at Wilton that he spent the time of his temporary loss of favour at Court in 1580. Here he wrote his pastoral romance, "Arcadia." He dedicated it to his sister. "It is done," he said, "only for you, only to you." It is to be shown only to "such friends who will weigh error in the balance of good-will"; "for severer eyes it is not, being

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a trifle, and that triflingly handled." The "Arcadia" was, however, published in 1595, after Sidney's death. It contains many lyrics, some of them of considerable beauty.

## MY SHEEP ARE THOUGHTS

My sheep are thoughts, which I both guide and serve ;  
Their pasture is fair hills of fruitless love,  
On barren sweets they feed, and feeding starve,  
I wail their lot, but will not other prove ;  
My sheephook is wan hope, which all upholds ;  
My weeds Desire, cut out in endless folds ;  
    What wool my sheep shall bear, whilst thus they  
    live,  
In you it is, you must the judgment give.

When Philip returned to Court in the autumn of 1580 he heard the news that Penelope Devereux was betrothed to an elderly nobleman of the Court, Lord Rich. In the shock of this surprise he seems to have discovered the force of the affection he had treated so lightly, or perhaps love first awoke through the sharp sting of disappointment. The bitterness of his feeling found expression in the lyric "A Dirge."

## A DIRGE

Ring out your bells, let mourning shews be spread ;  
For Love is dead :  
    All love is dead, infected  
With plague of deep disdain :  
    Worth, as nought worth, rejected,  
And Faith fair scorn doth gain.

# AND THEIR POETRY

From so ungrateful fancy,  
From such a female frenzy,  
From them that use men thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

Weep, neighbours, weep ; do you not hear it said  
That Love is dead ?

His death-bed, peacock's folly ;  
His winding sheet is shame ;  
His will, false-seeming holy,  
His sole exec'tor, blame.

From so ungrateful fancy,  
From such a female frenzy,  
From them that use men thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

Let dirge be sung and trentals rightly read,  
For Love is dead :

Sir Wrong his tomb ordaineth  
My mistress' marble heart ;

Which epitaph containeth,  
" Her eyes were once his dart."

From so ungrateful fancy,  
From such a female frenzy,  
From them that use men thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

Alas, I lie ; rage hath this error bred ;  
Love is not dead :

Love is not dead, but sleepeth  
In her unmatched mind,  
Where she his counsel keepeth  
Till due deserts she find.

Therefore from so vile fancy,  
To call such wit a frenzy,  
Who Love can temper thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

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Sidney was transformed. The grave ambitious courtier became the passionate lover. The laggard in love now wooed his lady with a fire and eagerness which drove all thoughts save thoughts of her from his mind. The whole story of his love is told in the "Astrophel and Stella" sonnets. Under the names of Astrophel and Stella he signified himself and Penelope Devereux, who in 1581 or 1582—the date is uncertain—became Penelope Rich. Much controversy has arisen as to the date of these sonnets, and the extent to which they are a true expression of the writer's feelings. Into these questions it is not necessary here to enter in detail. Doubtless the sonnets show some natural exaggeration, and employ many of the conventional poetic devices of the time. But this does not mean that their main inspiration was not sincere. The images used are at times grandiloquent and far-fetched, but Sidney was used to the language of a Court where speech was habitually stiffened into artificial richness. As Charles Lamb reminds us, "The images which lie before our feet (though by some accounted the only natural) are the least natural for the high Sydnean love to express its fancies by."

"Astrophel and Stella" is the finest collection of sonnets (Shakespeare's, of course, excepted) among the many sonnet sequences which the Elizabethan age produced. The poems maintain a high level of excellence, while the best rise to the heights of true and passionate poetry. "The verse," says Lamb, "runs off swiftly and gal-



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lantly. It might have been tuned to the trumpet." Here is no "fever of passion wasting itself upon a thin diet of dainty words, but a transcendent passion pervading and illuminating action, pursuits, studies, feats of arms, the opinions of contemporaries and his judgment of them."

### I

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,  
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my  
pain,—

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make  
her know,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe ;

Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,

Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burn'd  
brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's  
stay ;

Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's  
blows ;

And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.

Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my  
throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite ;

Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart, and  
write.

### 31

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies !

How silently, and with how wan a face !

What, may it be that even in heavenly place

That busy archer his sharp arrows tries !

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes  
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case,  
I read it in thy looks ; thy languisht grace,  
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.  
Then, even of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,  
Is constant love deem'd there but want of wit ?  
Are beauties there as proud as here they be ?  
Do they above love to be lov'd, and yet  
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess ?  
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness ?

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Come, Sleep ! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,  
The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,  
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,  
Th' indifferent judge between the high and low ;  
With shield of proof shield me from out the press  
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw :  
O make in me those civil wars to cease ;  
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.  
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,  
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,  
A rosy garland and a weary head :  
And if these things, as being thine in right,  
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,  
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

Perhaps to this period also belongs the beautiful song "Philomela," from the collection of miscellaneous poems first published in the "Arcadia" of 1595, under the heading of "Certain Sonnets of Sir Philip Sidney never before printed."

# AND THEIR POETRY

The nightingale as soon as April bringeth  
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,  
While late-bare earth, proud of new clothing, springeth  
Sings out her woes, a thorn her song book making ;  
    And mournfully bewailing,  
    Her throat in tunes expresseth  
    What grief her breast oppresseth  
For Tereus' force on her chaste will prevailing.  
O Philomela fair, O take some gladness,  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness ;  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth ;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.

Alas, she hath no other cause of anguish  
    But Tereus' love, on her by strong hand wroken,  
Wherein she suffering, all her spirits languish,  
    Full womanlike complains her will was broken.  
    But I, who, daily craving,  
    Cannot have to content me,  
    Have more cause to lament me,  
Since wanting is more woe than too much having.  
O Philomela fair, O take some gladness  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness ;  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth ;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.

The "Astrophel and Stella" sonnets were probably all written in the space of a year, and there are signs in those which close the series that the passion of the poet, lacking food, is wearing itself out.

107

Stella, since thou so right a princess art  
Of all the powers which life bestows on me,  
That ere by them ought undertaken be,  
They first resort unto that sovereign part ;

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

Sweet, for a while give respite to my heart,  
Which pants as though it still should leap to thee :  
And on my thoughts give thy lieutenancy  
To this great cause, which needs both use and art.  
And as a queen, who from her presence sends  
Whom she employs, dismiss from thee my wit,  
Till it have wrought what thy own will attends,  
On servants' shame oft masters' blame doth sit :  
O let not fools in me thy works reprove,  
And scorning say, " See what it is to love ! "

In 1583 Sidney married Frances, daughter of Elizabeth's minister, Sir Francis Walsingham. During the next three years the affairs of England, especially her relations with foreign powers, occupied his mind. In 1585 he went to the Netherlands as Governor of Flushing, and in 1586, at the battle of Zutphen, he received the wound which caused his death. The story of how he gave up to a dying soldier the cup of cold water brought to him on the battlefield has long formed part of the great world epic of heroic deeds. He was carried to Arnheim, and there, twenty-five days later, he died, after enduring great suffering with a brave patience which witnessed " that those sweet and large affections in him could no more be contracted with the narrowness of pain, grief, or sickness than any sparkle of our immortality can be privately buried in the shadow of death."

The mourning for Sir Philip Sidney was deep and universal, and is testified to by a mass of elegiac verse such as the death of no other man or woman has ever called forth. Two of these poems

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are given here. The first is by Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, the friend of Sidney's early years ; the second is by Sir Walter Raleigh, who formed one of the group of poets and notable men that gathered round Spenser and Sidney.

## SILENCE AUGMENTETH GRIEF

Silence augmenteth grief, writing increaseth rage,  
Staled are my thoughts, which loved and lost the  
wonder of our age ;  
Yet quickened now with fire, though dead with frost  
ere now,  
Enraged I write, I know not what ; dead—quick—  
I know not how.

Hard-hearted minds relent and Rigour's tears abound,  
And Envy strangely rues his end, in whom no fault  
she found.

Knowledge her light hath lost, Valour hath slain her  
knight,  
Sidney is dead, dead is my friend, dead is the world's  
delight.

Place pensive wails his fall, whose presence was her  
pride,  
Time crieth out, my ebb is come ; his life was my  
spring-tide !  
Fame mourns in that she lost the ground of her  
reports,  
Each living wight laments his lack, and all in sundry  
sorts.

He was (woe worth that word !) to each well-thinking  
mind  
A spotless friend, a matchless man, whose virtue ever  
shined,

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

Declaring in his thoughts, his life and that he writ,  
Highest conceits, longest foresights, and deepest  
works of wit.

*Lord Brooke*

## AN EPITAPH UPON THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

There didst thou vanquish shame and tedious age,  
Grief, sorrow, sickness and base fortune's might ;  
Thy rising day saw never woful night,  
But passed with praise from off this worldly stage.

Back to the camp by thee that day was brought,  
First thine own death ; and after, thy long fame ;  
Tears to the soldiers ; the proud Castilian's shame ;  
Virtue expressed, and honour truly taught.

What hath he lost that such great grace hath won ?  
Young years for endless years, and hope unsure  
Of fortune's gifts for wealth that still shall dure :  
O happy race, with so great praises run !

England doth hold thy limbs, that bred the same ;  
Flanders thy valour, where it last was tried ;  
The camp thy sorrow, where thy body died ;  
Thy friends thy want ; the world thy virtue's fame ;

Nations thy wit ; our minds lay up thy love ;  
Letters thy learning ; thy loss years long to come ;  
In worthy hearts sorrow hath made thy tomb ;  
Thy soul and spirit enrich the heavens above.

*Sir W. Raleigh*

# AND THEIR POETRY

## IV

**A**T the time of Sidney's death Raleigh was thirty-four years old. Like Sidney he was soldier, courtier and poet, and had made for himself a name and standing in the country while he was yet quite young. His father was a Devonshire gentleman of moderate fortune, who could do little to forward his son's interests. It was chiefly by means of his own handsome face, gallant bearing, and quick wit that Raleigh made his way into the favour of Queen Elizabeth. His rise to fortune was rapid. The Queen made him a Privy Councillor and gave him large gifts from the confiscated estates of the Irish rebels ; later she bestowed on him profitable monopolies. He was never popular at Court or in the country, for the natural pride of his disposition made his manner often haughty and contemptuous ; but he was admired and envied for his personal attractions, his high position, the splendour of his dress and following. His great rival was the Earl of Essex, and when Essex's influence was in the ascendant Raleigh suffered a temporary eclipse. But he had other interests besides the interests of the Court. The call which sounded with more or less insistence in the ears of all the Elizabethans—the call to the wild untravelled places of the earth—came with special urgency to Raleigh. His restless, adventurous spirit drove him out wherever there was danger to be met or honour to be gained, while his zest of life, and

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

the eager curiosity of his nature led him into countless schemes which, though they seemed wild and extravagant, were not only noble in aim but often contained the germ of an idea really useful and practical. In 1584 an expedition organized by him founded the colony of Virginia ; and, although this was soon after temporarily stamped out, the exploit had substantial results. The colony was re-established in the reign of James I, and from his travels in America in connection with the scheme Raleigh brought back and introduced into England the tobacco plant and the potato.

Among the wild, magnificent dreams which throughout his life haunted Raleigh's brain was the dream of the fabled El Dorado, the golden city of boundless wealth which by the tradition of the day was said to exist in the untravelled regions of South America. With his keen and restless activity of brain Raleigh united the characteristic childlike credulity of the Elizabethan, and his imagination was fired with the idea of discovering this wonderful city, thus causing all Drake's adventures with Spanish treasure ships to pale before the grandeur of his achievement, and bringing unbounded treasure to add to the renown of the glorious England that he dearly loved. He believed that he had a clue to the whereabouts of this El Dorado, and in 1595 set off on an exploring expedition. He penetrated far into the country, but danger and difficulty forced him to give up the enterprise for a time, though he



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still ardently believed in the possibility of its ultimate success.

With all these activities Raleigh found time for reading, and for the keen and eager study which characterized the lively spirits of that age. "He was an indefatigable reader, whether by sea or land, and none of the least observers both of men and things." On sea-voyages he always took a trunk of books with him. The great writers and thinkers of the day gathered round him, and he gave them all the support that his means and his influence allowed. He was a friend and an enthusiastic admirer of Spenser, whom he introduced to the notice of Elizabeth, and in whose "Faerie Queene" he wrote one of his finest sonnets.

### A VISION UPON THIS CONCEIT OF THE FAIRY QUEEN

Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay,  
Within that temple where the vestal flame  
Was wont to burn : and, passing by that way,  
To see that buried dust of living fame,  
Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,  
All suddenly I saw the Fairy Queen ;  
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept, *why ?*  
And from thenceforth those graces were not seen, *why not*  
For they this Queen attended ; in whose stead  
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.  
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,  
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce  
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,  
And cursed the access of that celestial thief.

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

In the buoyant, versatile temper of his youth Raleigh turned with keen enjoyment to the popular pastime of verse-making. He caught up the fashions of his day and gave to them all the beauty which his lively fancy, his tuneful ear, and his true poetic temperament could bestow. Like many of his contemporaries, he delighted in metrical experiments which aimed at no subtle effects but courted novelty for the sake of novelty. All the tricks and turns of the fashionable pastoral were in his tongue. He had no care to preserve his compositions, regarding them simply as the recreations of his busy life. But some of them were secured by the booksellers of the day and published in various Miscellanies and Song Books. There are in all some thirty short poems which modern research has decided may reasonably be attributed to Raleigh. Several of these appeared in the miscellany "England's Helicon" (1600) with the signature "Ignoto." Of these the one most characteristic of the early period of the poet's life is "The Nymph's Reply," an answer to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" (see page 98).

### THE NYMPH'S REPLY

If all the world and love were young,  
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,  
These pretty pleasures might me move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

But time drives flocks from field to fold,  
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold ;

# AND THEIR POETRY

And Philomel becometh dumb ;  
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields  
To wayward winter reckoning yields :  
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,  
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,  
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,  
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,—  
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,  
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,—  
All those in me no means can move  
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed ;  
Had joys no date, nor age no need ;  
Then those delights my mind might move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

As the years went on and his treasured schemes came no nearer to fulfilment Raleigh began to suffer from disillusionment and heart-weariness. The buoyant spirit of his youth seems to have changed into a proud and better endurance. The hollowness of Court life and the uncertainty of Court favour aroused his utmost scorn. We are not sure what is the exact date of his poem "The Lie," but it belongs almost certainly to the closing years of the sixteenth century.

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## THE LIE

Go, Soul, the body's guest,  
Upon a thankless arrant :  
Fear not to touch the best ;  
The truth shall be thy warrant :  
Go, since I needs must die,  
And give the world the lie.

Say to the court, it glows  
And shines like rotten wood ;  
Say to the church, it shows  
What's good, and doth no good :  
If court and church reply,  
Then give them both the lie.

Tell potentates, they live  
Acting by others' action ;  
Not loved unless they give,  
Not strong but by a faction :  
If potentates reply,  
Give potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition,  
That manage the estate,  
Their purpose is ambition,  
Their practice only hate :  
And if they once reply,  
Then give them all the lie.

Tell faith it's fled the city ;  
Tell how the country erreth ;  
Tell manhood shakes off pity ;  
Tell virtue least preferreth :  
And if they do reply,  
Spare not to give the lie.

# AND THEIR POETRY

So when thou hast, as I  
    Commanded thee, done blabbing,—  
Although to give the lie  
    Deserves no less than stabbing,—  
Stab at thee he that will,  
No stab the soul can kill.

While Elizabeth lived, however, Raleigh had some hope that things might mend, and that his great schemes would ultimately receive the helping hand which should convert them into glorious successes and means of benefit to the country at large. Elizabeth knew a great man when she saw him, though she had no scruple in wearing out his patience and breaking his heart if to do so suited her purpose. But Elizabeth died in 1603, and there came to the throne a king who had no eye for true greatness, and to whom Raleigh appeared simply as the restless, dangerous man that his enemies represented him to be. Cecil was the head of the party then dominant at Court, and Cecil had always been bitterly opposed to Raleigh. It was probably through his influence that Raleigh was implicated in what is known as the Main Plot of 1603, which had for its objects the removal of Cecil from his place in the government, and the placing of Arabella Stuart on the throne, by means of help from Spain. Raleigh was imprisoned in the Tower, and there he remained for nearly thirteen years. His confinement was not made rigorous. His wife and son were with him, and he was allowed to carry on experiments

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in chemistry, which was one of the departments of thought in which his versatile mind was keenly interested. Here too he carried on his literary studies, wrote his "History of the World," and perhaps some poems. The well-known "His Pilgrimage" is attributed by tradition to this period.

### HIS PILGRIMAGE

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,  
My staff of faith to walk upon,  
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,  
My bottle of salvation,  
My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;  
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.  
  
Blood must be my body's balmer ;  
No other balm will there be given ;  
Whilst my soul, like quiet palmer,  
Travelleth towards the land of heaven ;  
Over the silver mountains,  
Where spring the nectar fountains :  
There will I kiss  
The bowl of bliss ;  
And drink mine everlasting fill  
Upon every milken hill.  
My soul will be a-dry before ;  
But after, it will thirst no more.  
  
Then by that happy blissful day,  
More peaceful pilgrims I shall see,  
That have cast off their rags of clay,  
And walk apparell'd fresh like me.  
I'll take them first  
To quench their thirst  
And taste of nectar suckets,

# AND THEIR POETRY

At those clear wells  
Where sweetness dwells,  
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.

These years spent in the Tower made Raleigh into a popular hero. In the days of his prosperity, his haughty temper had obscured the splendour of his achievements. Now faults were forgotten, and the sympathy of the nation was with him.

But none of these things could content his eager spirit. His old schemes still haunted him, and he saw constantly before his eyes the golden wonderful land across the sea. He yearned to prove to others the reality of the vision that possessed him. At last he persuaded James to allow him to make one more expedition to Guiana, promising to bring back a cargo of gold for the royal treasury. He set sail with fourteen vessels, attacked and burnt the Spanish town of St. Thomas, but failed in trying to make his way further into the country. His son was killed in a skirmish, and hope left him. The expedition was a failure. Raleigh returned to England and was again imprisoned in the Tower. This time his imprisonment did not last long. He was executed October 1618, and he met his death with the steadfastness and composure of a proud and gallant gentleman. On the evening before his death he wrote in his Bible his farewell to life in words which tell not only of a weariness which could part with life without repining, but a faith which could look forward to death without fear.

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## VERSES WRITTEN IN HIS BIBLE IN THE GATEHOUSE AT WESTMINSTER

Even such is time, that takes in trust,  
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,  
And pays us but with earth and dust ;  
Who, in the dark and silent grave,  
When we have wandered all our ways,  
Shuts up the story of our days ;  
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

With these noble words must always be associated those others, almost equally noble, with which he closed his " History of the World " :  
" O eloquent, just and mighty death ! Whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded ! What none have dared, thou hast done ! And whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised ! Thou hast drawn together all the far-fetched greatness, all the pride, cruelty and ambition of men ; and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*"

### V

**A** SMALL group of poets whom we may call minor Court poets may fitly be considered in this place. They were not men of rank and position like Sidney and Raleigh, but belonged generally to the upper middle class and made their acquaintance with Court life under the patronage of some great nobleman. Most of



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these are little more than names to a later generation ; but the lyrics that they have left constitute a sufficient claim for the few known facts of their lives to be recorded here.

Of the first of the group, John Lyly, some particulars can be gathered. He was born, he tells us, "in the wylde of Kent," of honest parents. He was probably the grandson of William Lilly, the famous grammarian, first head master of St. Paul's Grammar School. He was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, but he does not seem to have gained much credit there. He was, says Anthony Wood, his biographer, "always averse to the crabbed studies of logic and philosophy. . . . His genie being naturally bent to the pleasant paths of poetry, he did in a manner neglect academic studies." In 1573 he left the University with the reputation of "a noted wit," and four or five years later we find him living in the Savoy Palace, then transformed into "a charitable foundation to harbour a Hundred poor People Sick or Lame or Travelers," and of which various chambers were let out to tenants. Soon after he had settled in London, Lyly is spoken of as being private secretary to the Earl of Oxford. Through this employment he probably gained some knowledge of the prevailing fashions of the Court, and he made use of this knowledge in his book "Euphues," written in 1579. He seized with wonderful accuracy all the peculiarities of the artificial fashion of speech which had been introduced from the Continent and was beginning

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to make its way in England, and he elaborated these into a definite style of expression. "Fitting his work with delicate intuition to a wavering, irresolute tendency, uncertain as yet of its object, he left that tendency by reaction a self-conscious fashion." His style can be better appreciated by means of example than by a description. "I perceive at the last that muske, although it be sweet in the smell is sower in the smacke, that leafe of the cedar tree, though it be faire to be seene, yet the seroppe depriveth sight, that friendshippe, though it be plighted by shaking the hand, yet it is shaken off by fraude of the heart. But thou hast not much to boast off, for as thou hast wonne a fickle Lady, so hast thou lost a faythfull friende."

These curious, alliterative, balanced sentences, illustrated by far-fetched allusions and similes, met the taste and practice of the time, and "Euphuism," as it was called, became the prevailing fashion. "All our ladies were then his schollers," said Edward Blount, writing of Lyly in 1632. "And that Beautie in Court which could not Parley Euphueisme was as little regarded as she which now there speaks not French." Lyly became, after a fashion, the most famous figure at the Court. Great ladies submitted to his direction, and he was looked upon as the arbiter in all questions concerning elegance of diction or polite observances. He was, we are told, a little man, this "witty, comical, facetiously quick and unparalleled John Lyly," and we imagine him as neat, precise

## AND THEIR POETRY

and dainty in his person as in his work. He was fond of society, and shone in it by virtue of his bright and entertaining conversation ; he was a great smoker of the newly introduced tobacco, and " a hungry reader of good books." He was, according to Gabriel Harvey, " a mad lad as ever twang'd, never troubled with any substance of witt, or circumstance of honestie, sometime the fiddlesticke of Oxford, now the very bable of London." This, it must be remembered, however, is the account of an enemy.

In about 1581 Lyly turned to a new literary enterprise, which was probably suggested to him by the Earl of Oxford. The taste for dramatic representations had been steadily growing in England, and at this time there were in existence several companies of actors, each under the patronage of some great person, which acted the masques, interludes and other dramatic productions then available. Some of these companies consisted of the boys who formed the choir of a church, and one of the most noted of these was the Company of Child Players of the Chapel Royal. Lyly's new project was the writing of plays for this company, and he was fully successful. The lyrics which are to be found in the eight plays which he wrote constitute one of his chief claims to remembrance. All are light and tuneful, and some are of real beauty ; there are lines in " Spring's Welcome " which may receive the high praise of comparison with Shakespeare's " Hark, hark ! the lark."

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

## CUPID AND MY CAMPASPE

Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses—Cupid paid.  
He stakes his quiver, bow and arrows,  
His mother's doves and team of sparrows :  
Loses them too ; then down he throws  
The coral of his lip, the rose  
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how) ;  
With these the crystal of his brow,  
And then the dimple of his chin—  
All these did my Campaspe win.  
At last he set her both his eyes.—  
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.  
O Love, has she done this to thee ?  
What shall, alas ! become of me ?

## SPRING'S WELCOME

What bird so sings, yet so does wail ?  
O, 'tis the ravished nightingale.  
Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu ! she cries,  
And still her woes at midnight rise.  
Brave prick-song ! Who is't now we hear ?  
None but the lark so shrill and clear ;  
Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings  
The morn not waking till she sings.  
Hark, hark, with what a pretty throat  
Poor robin redbreast tunes his note :  
Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing  
Cuckoo ! to welcome in the Spring !  
Cuckoo ! to welcome in the Spring !

# AND THEIR POETRY

## SING TO APOLLO

Sing to Apollo, god of day,  
Whose golden beams with morning play,  
And make her eyes so brightly shine,  
Aurora's face is called divine ;  
Sing to Phœbus and that throne  
Of diamonds which he sits upon.

Io, pæans let us sing  
To Physic's and to Poesy's King !

Crown all his altars with bright fire,  
Laurels bind about his lyre,  
A Daphnean coronet for his head,  
The Muses dance about his bed ;  
When on his ravishing lute he plays,  
Strew his temple round with bays.

Io, pæans let us sing  
To the glittering Delian king !

## PAN'S SYRINX

Pan's Syrinx was a girl indeed,  
Though now she's turned into a reed.  
From that dear reed Pan's pipe doth come  
A pipe that strikes Apollo dumb ;  
Nor flute, nor lute, nor gittern can  
So chant it, as the pipe of Pan.  
Cross-gartered swains, and dairy girls,  
With faces smug and round as pearls,  
When Pan's shrill pipe begins to play,  
With dancing wear out night and day ;  
The bag-pipe drone his hum lays by  
When Pan sounds up his minstrelsy.  
His minstrelsy ! O base ! This quill  
Which at my mouth with wind I fill

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Puts me in mind though her I miss  
That still my Syrinx' lips I kiss.

For thirteen years Lyly was the Court playwright. His ambition was to obtain the post of Master of the Revels, but, although from time to time hopes were held out to him, nothing substantial followed. Two petitions which he addressed to the Queen have survived, and in the second of these, dated 1601, he prays that since he seemed born to have nothing he might have a protection to pay nothing, "which suite is like his, that having followed the Court ten years, for recompence of his servis committed a Robberie and took it out in a pardon." He died November 1606, being then fifty-two years of age.

The four other members of this group may be very briefly dealt with. Samuel Daniel, son of a music-master of Taunton, was like Lyly a scholar of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, but "his geny being more prone to easier and smoother studies than in pecking and hewing at logic," he gained no honours at the University, which he left in 1582. He travelled in Italy, and afterwards became a tutor, first in the family of the Earl of Pembroke, afterwards in that of the Countess of Cumberland. His home was chiefly in Yorkshire, but he kept up a connexion with the Court, and in 1603 addressed congratulatory verses to James I upon his accession. Daniel is chiefly remembered for his historical poems, but one sonnet in his sonnet sequence, entitled "Delia," with which he began his literary

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career must always find a place in any collection of Elizabethan lyrical poems.

## CARE-CHARMER SLEEP

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,  
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born :  
Relieve my languish and restore the light ;  
With dark forgetting of my care, return,  
And let the day be time enough to mourn  
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth :  
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn  
Without the torment of the night's untruth.  
Cease dreams, the images of day desires,  
To model forth the passions of the morrow ;  
Never let rising sun approve you liars,  
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.  
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,  
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

Richard Barnfield was a Staffordshire gentleman of whose life very little is known except that he was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and passed some years in London as a member of the literary circle which gathered round Lady Rich, Sir Philip Sidney's "Stella." It was the fashion of the day for ladies of rank and influence to become the patronesses of poets who occupied a somewhat lower social position, to endeavour to forward their interests, and to receive in return flattering tributes in verse. Until quite recently Barnfield's best poems were attributed to Shakespeare. His "Ode" was printed in the Elizabethan miscellany called "The Passionate Pilgrim," with the name of William

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Shakespeare appended. This poem, and the famous sonnet, "If music and sweet poetry agree," are given here.

## AN ODE

### AS IT FELL UPON A DAY

As it fell upon a day  
In the merry month of May  
Sitting in a pleasant shade  
Which a grove of myrtles made,  
Beasts did leap, and birds did sing,  
Trees did grow, and plants did spring ;  
Everything did banish moan,  
Save the Nightingale alone.  
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,  
Leaned her breast up-till a thorn,  
And there sung the dolefull'st ditty  
That to hear it was great pity.  
*Fie, fie, fie*; now would she cry ;  
*Teru, teru*; by and by :  
That to hear her so complain  
Scarce I could from tears refrain ;  
For her griefs so lively shown  
Made me think upon mine own.  
—" Ah," thought I, " thou mourn'st in vain,  
None takes pity on thy pain ;  
Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee,  
Ruthless beasts, they will not cheer thee ;  
King Pandion, he is dead,  
All thy friends are lapped in lead :  
All thy fellow-birds do sing  
Careless of thy sorrowing :  
Even so, poor bird, like thee,  
None alive will pity me.



# AND THEIR POETRY

Whilst as fickle Fortune smiled,  
Thou and I were both beguiled.  
Every one that flatters thee  
Is no friend in misery.  
Words are easy, like the wind ;  
Faithful friends are hard to find :  
Every man will be thy friend  
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend ;  
But if store of crowns be scant,  
No man will supply thy want.  
If that one be prodigal,  
Bountiful they will him call,  
And with such-like flattering,  
' Pity but he were a king ; '  
If he be addict to vice,  
Quickly him they will entice ;  
But if Fortune once do frown,  
Then farewell his great renown ;  
They that fawned on him before  
Use his company no more.  
He that is thy friend indeed,  
He will help thee in thy need :  
If thou sorrow, he will weep ;  
If thou wake, he cannot sleep ;  
Thus of every grief in heart  
He with thee doth bear a part.  
These are certain signs to know  
Faithful friend from flattering foe."

## SONNET TO HIS FRIEND MAISTER R. L.

If music and sweet poetry agree,  
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,  
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me  
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.

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Dowland<sup>1</sup> to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch  
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense ;  
Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such  
As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.  
Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound  
That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes ;  
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd  
Whenas himself to singing he betakes.

One god is god of both, as poets feign ;  
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.

Henry Constable also belonged to Lady Rich's literary circle. He was a Roman Catholic, and, during the time when the feeling against the Jesuits was at its height in England, was obliged to go abroad for some years. Returning without permission, he was imprisoned in the Tower. Nothing further is known of his life, save that he died in 1616.

## DAMELUS' SONG TO HIS DIAPHENIA

Diaphenia, like the daffadowndilly,  
White as the sun, fair as the lily,  
Heigho, how I do love thee !  
I do love thee as my lambs  
Are belovèd of their dams :  
How blest were I if thou wouldst prove me.

Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,  
That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,  
Fair sweet, how I do love thee !  
I do love thee as each flower  
Loves the sun's life-giving power ;  
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.

<sup>1</sup> A short account of John Dowland is given on page 139.

# AND THEIR POETRY

Diaphenia, like to all things blessèd,  
When all thy praises are expressèd,  
Dear joy, how I do love thee !  
As birds do love the Spring,  
Or the bees their careful king :  
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me.

## SONNET PREFIXED TO SIDNEY'S APOLOGY FOR POETRY, 1595

Give pardon, blessed soul ! to my bold cries,  
If they, importune, interrupt thy song,  
Which now with joyful notes thou sing'st among  
The angel-quiristers of th' heavenly skies.  
Give pardon eke, sweet soul, to my slow cries,  
That since I saw thee now it is so long ;  
And yet the tears that unto thee belong,  
To thee as yet they did not sacrifice ;  
I did not know that thou wert dead before,  
I did not feel the grief I did sustain :  
The greater stroke astonisheth the more,  
Astonishment takes from us sense of pain :  
I stood amaz'd when others' tears begun,  
And now begin to weep when they have done.

Nicholas Breton was probably in the service of Sidney or of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, or of both. He was a prolific writer of both verse and prose. He wrote tracts, pamphlets, and the famous "characters" of the time as well as charming lyrics.

## WHO CAN LIVE IN HEART SO GLAD

Who can live in heart so glad  
As the merry country lad ?  
Who upon a fair green balk  
May at pleasure sit and walk,

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

And amid the azure skies  
See the morning sun arise,  
While he hears in every Spring  
How the birds do chirp and sing ;  
Or before the hounds in cry  
See the hare go stealing by,  
Or along the shallow brook,  
Angling with a baited hook,  
See the fishes leap and play  
In a blessed sunny day ;  
Or to hear the partridge call  
Till she have her covey all ;  
Or to see the subtle fox,  
How the villain plies the box,  
After feeding on his prey ;  
How he closely sneaks away  
Through the hedge and down the furrow,  
Till he gets into his burrow :  
Then the bee to gather honey,  
And the little black-haired coney  
On a bank for sunny place  
With her forefeet wash her face :  
Are not these with thousands moe  
Than the courts of kings do know ?

## VI

**T**HERE is one question to which some consideration must be given before we leave the courtly poets and pass to the next group of those who made Elizabeth's reign famous. How far did the influence of the Queen and of the life led at Court affect their lives and their work ? To find an answer, though perhaps not a full answer, to this question is not

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difficult. Elizabeth was, in some degree, the inspiration of everything that was done by such of her subjects as came into personal contact with her. The poets of the Court regarded her with a real devotion, as their mistress to whom they paid willing tribute. So far her influence was good. It gave to the poems a high chivalrous tone and breathed into them the warmth and enthusiasm of a sincere affection. But Elizabeth was not satisfied with this. Her appetite for praise and adulation required to be fed with food of a different character. The homage paid her by her band of poets as their great queen, admired, revered, beloved, was not enough. She wished to be celebrated also as the model of beauty, of grace, of wit, of all the brilliant qualities that could dazzle and enslave the heart of man. When her poets found this out, and found that no flattery was too gross for her acceptance, they naturally tried to please her, and many really fine poems of the time are marred by their tone of exaggerated though not wholly insincere devotion. Neither Shakespeare nor Spenser was able to resist the temptation thus offered, though in Shakespeare's works the lapses are comparatively few ; in Spenser's they mark almost every page. Raleigh wrote a long poem—"Cynthia"—which had for its sole object the glorification of the Queen, but the greater part of this has been lost ; enough can be found in his other works, however, to testify to the completeness with which he adopted the prevailing fashion, though he did so in his own

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

large, free manner. His sonnet appended to Spenser's "Faerie Queene," for example, is so noble and dignified a tribute that one scarcely ventures to call it flattery (*see* page 53).

The chorus of praise went on throughout Elizabeth's reign. As one voice died away the strain was taken up by another, and the group which gathered round the aged Queen as the sixteenth century passed into the seventeenth sang full as loudly, though perhaps not so sweetly and spontaneously, as the poets who had preceded them. Of this group two of the chief figures were Sidney's friends, Fulke Greville and Edward Dyer. Greville had by this time become Lord Brooke, a Privy Councillor and the holder of important State offices. The fine powers of his mind had been mainly directed to the study of philosophy and science, and most of his poems are on subjects connected with these. "For my own part," he says in his "Life of Sidney," where he is comparing his own poetry with that of his friend, "I found my creeping genius more fixed upon the images of life than the images of wit, and therefore chose not to write to them on whose foot the black ox had not already trod, as the proverb is, but to those only that are weather-beaten in the sea of the world, such as having lost the sight of their gardens and groves, study to sail on a right course among rocks and quicksands." His tributes to the Queen, therefore, have naturally more of weight and dignity than of lightness and grace.

# AND THEIR POETRY

## ELIZABETH REGINA

Under a throne I saw a virgin sit,  
The red and white rose quartered in her face,  
Star of the North!—and for true guards to it,  
Princes, church, states, all pointing out her grace.  
The homage done her was not born of Wit;  
Wisdom admir'd, Zeal took Ambition's place,  
State in her eyes taught Order how to fit  
And fix Confusion's unobserving race.

Fortune can here claim nothing truly great,  
But that this princely creature is her seat.

Edward Dyer, whom Gabriel Harvey classed with Sidney as one of the "two very diamonds" of Elizabeth's Court, had been knighted in 1596 for his services as ambassador to Denmark, and had become, like Greville, a statesman and man of affairs. His poems addressed to Elizabeth are in a lighter vein than those of Greville, but are of little merit. One stanza may be quoted.

The fere and fellow of thy smart  
Prometheus, I am indeed,  
Upon whose ever living heart  
The greedy gryphes do daily feed.  
But he that lifts his heart so high  
Must be content to pine and die.

Sir John Davies was another prominent member of this later group. In his early years he is said to have lived a wild and riotous life. After leaving Oxford he came in 1587 to London to study law, but was soon afterwards expelled for brawling in the hall of the Temple. Later,

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through the intervention of powerful friends, he was readmitted, and he ultimately became Solicitor- and Attorney-General for Ireland. His chief work is "Nosce Teipsum," a long philosophical poem published 1599, and dedicated

To that clear majesty which in the North  
Doth like another sun in glory rise.

In the same year he published his "Hymns to Astrea," in praise of Elizabeth. Each of these hymns is written in the form of an acrostic, the initial letters making the words "Elizabeth Regina." Yet they show no sign of the constraint which artificial devices of this kind usually bring. They are, most of them, fresh and tuneful songs which seem to have taken the form of an acrostic by chance.

### TO THE LARK

Early cheerful mounting lark,  
Light's gentle usher, morning's clark,  
In merry notes delighting :  
Stint awhile thy song, and hark,  
And learn my new inditing.

Bear up this hymn, to Heav'n it bear,  
E'en up to Heav'n, and sing it there,  
To Heav'n each morning bear it ;  
Have it set to some sweet sphere,  
And let the angels hear it.

Renowned Astrea, that great name,  
Exceeding great in worth and fame,



# AND THEIR POETRY

Great worth hath so renown'd it,  
It is Astrea's name I praise,  
Now then, sweet lark, do thou it raise  
And in high Heaven resound it.

Sir Henry Wotton is almost exactly contemporary with Sir John Davies, and, like him, had just left Oxford in the famous year of the Armada. His life was a busy one, first as a distinguished diplomatist and ambassador, afterwards as Provost of Eton, and he had little time for writing poetry. Two of his lyrics, however, have gained permanent fame (*see* pages 80, 81). He is remembered also for his connection with several of the celebrated writers of his time. He was the friend of Sir Edward Dyer and John Donne, he gave kindly help and encouragement to Milton, whose genius he early recognized; his life was written by Izaak Walton, whose love for the "gentle art" of angling he fully shared, and an elegy on his death was written by Abraham Cowley. Sir Henry served Elizabeth during the last ten years of her reign, but he reserved his finest praise for the daughter of the king who succeeded her. The tribute is worthy of the young queen who was known in her native country as "Queen of Hearts."

## ON HIS MISTRESS, THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA

You meaner beauties of the night,  
That poorly satisfy our eyes  
More by your number than your light ;

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

You common people of the skies ;  
What are you when the moon shall rise ?

You curious chanters of the wood,  
That warble forth Dame Nature's lays,  
Thinking your passions understood  
By your weak accents ; what's your praise,  
When Philomel her voice shall raise ?

You violets that first appear,  
By your pure purple mantles known  
Like the proud virgins of the year,  
As if the spring were all your own ;  
What are you when the rose is blown ?

So, when my mistress shall be seen  
In form and beauty of her mind,  
By virtue first, then choice, a Queen,  
Tell me if she were not designed  
The eclipse and glory of her kind ?

The second of Sir Henry Wotton's lyrics illustrates another influence which affected the poetry of the "Courtly Makers." Court life which on one side was so brilliant, so dazzling, so satisfying to the intellect, so stimulating to ambition, was, on another side, hollow and disappointing, full of temptations, difficulties, and hardships. Spenser tells us of the sickness of heart that "hope deferred" brought to most of the Court poets.

Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,  
What hell it is in suing long to bide :  
To lose good days, that might be better spent ;  
To waste long nights in pensive discontent ;

## AND THEIR POETRY

To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow ;  
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow ;  
To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers ;  
To have thy asking, yet wait many years ;  
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares ;  
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs ;  
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,  
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone ;  
Unhappy wight, born to disastrous end,  
That doth his life in so long tendance spend.

<sup>NIGGARDLY</sup>  
The parsimonious temper of Elizabeth made her—except at great crises, when she could rise royally to the occasion—slow and grudging in rewards. She hated to spend money where it could be saved. Life at her Court was splendid, but it lacked even common comforts. There is a letter extant from Sir Philip Sidney's mother, Lady Mary, to her husband's secretary, in which she says : " I have thought good to put you in remembrance to move my Lord Chamberlain in my Lord's name to have some other room than my chamber for my Lord to have his resort unto, as he was wont to have ; or else my Lord will be greatly troubled, when he shall have any matters of despatch : my lodgings, you see, being very little, and myself continually sick and not able to be much out of my bed. For the night-time one roof, with God's grace, shall serve us. For the daytime, the queen will look to have my chamber always in a readiness for her Majesty's coming thither ; and though my Lord himself can be no impediment thereto by his own presence, yet his Lordship, trusting to no place

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else to be provided for him, will be, as I said before, troubled for want of a convenient place for the despatch of such people as shall have occasion to come to him." We wonder that Sir Henry and Lady Mary could leave lovely Penshurst and consent to be thus miserably accommodated in one small room; but the attraction of the Court and the will of the Queen were irresistible.

All these things drove the Court poets to a consideration of what constitutes real happiness, and how much more to be desired is the humble life of a poor shepherd or craftsman than that of a man of high estate. Poems on these subjects are common. Of these "The Character of a Happy Life" stands highest.

### THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught  
That serveth not another's will;  
Whose armour is his honest thought,  
And simple truth his utmost skill;

Whose passions not his masters are;  
Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
Untied unto the world by care  
Of public fame or private breath;

Who envies none that chance doth raise,  
Nor vice; who never understood  
How deepest wounds are given by praise;  
Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

# AND THEIR POETRY

Who hath his life from rumours freed ;  
Whose conscience is his strong retreat ;  
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,  
Nor ruin make oppressors great ;

Who God doth late and early pray  
More of His grace than gifts to lend ;  
And entertains the harmless day  
With a religious book or friend.

This man is freed from servile bands  
Of hope to rise or fear to fall :  
Lord of himself, though not of lands,  
And, having nothing, yet hath all.

Sir Edward Dyer's " My Mind to me a Kingdom is " (see page 36) and Thomas Campion's " The Man of Life Upright " approach it very nearly.

## THE MAN OF LIFE UPRIGHT

The man of life upright,  
Whose guiltless heart is free  
From all dishonest deeds,  
Or thought of vanity ;

The man whose silent days  
In harmless joys are spent,  
Whom hopes cannot delude,  
Nor sorrow discontent,

That man needs neither towers  
Nor armour for defence,  
Nor secret vaults to fly  
From thunder's violence ;

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He only can behold  
With unaffrighted eyes  
The horrors of the deep  
And terrors of the skies.

Thus scorning all the cares  
That fate or fortune brings,  
He makes the heaven his book,  
His wisdom heavenly things ;

Good thoughts his only friends,  
His wealth a well-spent age,  
The earth his sober inn  
And quiet pilgrimage.

The little poem written by Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex, and said to have been enclosed in a letter to the Queen from Ireland, 1599, expresses the same ideas most charmingly.

## A PASSION OF MY LORD OF ESSEX

Happy were he could finish forth his fate  
In some unhaunted desert, most obscure  
From all societies, from love and hate  
Of worldly folk ; then might he sleep secure,  
Then wake again, and ever give God praise,  
Content with hips and haws and bramble-berry ;  
In contemplation spending all his days,  
And change of holy thoughts to make him merry ;  
Where, when he dies, his tomb may be a bush,  
Where harmless robin dwells with gentle thrush.

In conclusion, two anonymous poems may be quoted. The first is from "Robert Jones' Song

# AND THEIR POETRY

Book," the second, "Out of M. Bird's Set Songs."

## HAPPY HE

Happy he  
Who to sweet home retired,  
Shuns glory so admired ;  
And to himself lives free !

Whilst he who strives, with pride, to climb the skies,  
Falls down, with foul disgrace, before he rise.

Let who will  
The Active Life commend :  
And all his travails bend  
Earth with his fame to fill !

Such fame, so forced, at last dies with his death ;  
Which life maintained, by others' idle breath.

My delights,  
To dearest home confined,  
Shall there make good my mind  
Not awed with fortune's spites :

High trees heaven blasts, winds shake and honours  
fell,  
When lowly plants long time in safety dwell.

All I can,  
My worldly strife shall be,  
They, one day, say of me,  
" He died a good old man ! "

On his sad soul a heavy burden lies,  
Who, known to all, unknown to himself, dies.

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## THE HERDMAN'S HAPPY LIFE

What pleasure have great princes  
More dainty to their choice  
Than herdmen wild, who careless  
In quiet life rejoice ?  
And fortune's fate not fearing,  
Sing sweet in summer morning.

Their dealings plain and rightful,  
Are void of all deceit ;  
They never know how spiteful  
It is to kneel and wait  
On favourite presumptuous,  
Whose pride is vain and sumptuous.

All day their flocks each tendeth,  
At night they take their rest,  
More quiet than who sendeth  
His ship into the east,  
Where gold and pearl are plenty,  
But getting very dainty.

For lawyers and their pleading,  
They 'steem it not a straw ;  
They think that honest meaning  
Is of itself a law ;  
Where conscience judgeth plainly,  
They spend no money vainly.

Oh, happy who thus liveth !  
Not caring much for gold ;  
With clothing that sufficeth  
To keep him from the cold.  
Though poor and plain his diet,  
Yet merry it is and quiet.



# AND THEIR POETRY

## VII

**A**BOUT the time when Sidney, in his sister's home at Wilton, was writing his "Arcadia," and Raleigh was still an unknown soldier fighting the Queen's battles in Ireland; while Spenser was enjoying the first-fruits of the fame which his "Shepherd's Calendar" had brought him, and Shakespeare was yet a boy at Stratford-on-Avon, there came to London the first of a band of writers who were presently to become famous. They were, most of them, young men of good family but small fortunes, who had been students at Oxford or Cambridge or, according to the custom of the time, at both Universities. Few of them, however, were scholars; like Lyly, "their genie being naturally bent to the pleasant paths of poetry, they did in a manner neglect academical studies." There seems to have been at both the Universities a considerable number of members who were keenly interested in contemporary literature, and quick to recognize poetical ability when it showed itself in any of their company. In this way reputations were made before the real work in the world began. George Peele was, we read, during his Oxford days, "esteemed a most noted poet in the University." It is not strange that when, one after another, these young men who had already received the title of poet found their way to London, they did not follow very diligently the calling or profession in

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which they were placed (in most cases the law) but slipped away to wander in "the pleasant paths of poetry." They had caught dazzling glimpses of the good things that life had to bestow, and they pressed forward impetuously, even roughly, to claim these gifts for themselves. London was to them a wonderful city, a city which contained everything they coveted; where life was full and brilliant, where quick passions were at work, and keen wits strove with each other in exhilarating contest.

In its outward appearance Elizabethan London was a gayer and more inspiring place than the London of to-day. It was fuller of colour and diversity—in the dress of its citizens, the exterior of the buildings, the quaint signs which marked its houses, the irregularity of its streets. Its life was less hidden and private. "The merchant, instead of being shut up in his office during business hours, passed those hours on 'Change; the lawyer, instead of writing his opinion or holding his consultation in his own chambers, met his clients in Pauls', in the Temple Gardens, in Westminster Hall. The streets themselves . . . were full not of men hurrying merely from one place to another, but of men occupied in them, doing their business, taking their pleasure, living their lives on the actual pavement." The great river was as busy as the streets. Royal pageants passed along it; gaily decorated boats, heavy barges, and the light skiffs of watermen made it a scene of life and movement.

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The "University wits," as they were called, flung themselves into the full tide of this glowing, eager life. They were determined to leave no pleasure untasted, no experience untried. In their work as well as in their lives the same keen spirit of adventure possessed them as that which drove the Elizabethan seamen out to find new worlds. They ventured into new regions of literature with the same gallant courage with which Frobisher attempted the North-west Passage, and conquered a new measure with a zest equal to that with which Drake captured a Spanish treasure-ship. If we may call Shakespeare the sun of these times, warming, lighting, glorifying, and Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh and their companions the stars, obscured only by the sun's full radiance, then the University wits are the lightning flashes which, from a stormy and troubled sky, dart a ray of intense, almost bewildering brightness, and "ere a man has time to say behold! the jaws of darkness hath devoured it up." Their lives were, for the most part, as short as they were brilliant; and their deaths were unfortunate.

The interest of London for these men centred in the taverns and the theatres. These two meeting-places were, to men of lower rank, what Elizabeth's brilliant Court was to the high-born poets. To the taverns the large company of men who, in London, were living precariously by their wits, came for their social pleasures; and though these consisted largely in drunken carousings, yet there was perhaps some

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intellectual conversation, some " words full of subtle flame " even before the celebrated literary club was established at the Mermaid. Such as it was, it was the best society available, and to eager young men panting to see life society of some sort was a necessity. At the tavern they had the opportunity of studying a full and rich page from human life. Men of widely differing ranks and conditions met there. Shakespeare has given us a picture of the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap, with its motley company, and in several of his other plays he speaks of taverns in a manner which shows he was well acquainted with their customs and traditions.

Actors were among the most common of the frequenters of taverns. In their gay and splendid dress they were notable figures, and they caused the eyes of poor authors to turn wistfully toward the theatres as a means of livelihood for themselves. The taste for dramatic entertainment had spread from the Court to the country, and though the city authorities looked coldly on the companies of actors which were being formed to meet a public demand, the demand was so insistent that ways and means were found to meet it.

There were at least two theatres in existence at this time—the Theatre and the Curtain, both in the neighbourhood of Shoreditch, outside the City boundary. Others were soon afterwards built. Here audiences consisting of all classes of London citizens, though perhaps with a majority from the lower grades, assembled on

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several afternoons during the week, and the writers of the plays had to do their best to please and interest this mixed gathering. Public approval was the test of success. The type of play most favoured was of a boisterous and bloodthirsty character, diversified with fencing bouts, wrestling matches, processions, pageants, music and singing.

To the theatre and to the writing of plays the University wits were soon attracted. They had come to London to seek their fortune and had found it less than a golden one. They had spent in riotous living the scanty sums they could obtain by the writing of love poems or pamphlets, had feasted one day and starved the next. In the theatre they thought they saw a source of income which would make life all feasting and no fasting. They were mistaken, of course, for the fault lay in themselves.

A poet was he of repute,  
And wrote full many a playe,  
Now strutting in a silken sute,  
Then begging by the way.

They flung themselves into the new pursuit, however, with the utmost ardour, and produced works of no mean merit, though probably the best parts of these and those which will be longest remembered are the lyrics that are found scattered throughout their pages.

Of all this company of writers Robert Greene is the one of whose life we know most, and this

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is because he wrote in his last years a long lament over the sins and failings which had brought him to the miserable condition in which he then was. He was born at Norwich about 1560. He graduated at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1578, then travelled in Italy and Spain, and took his degree of M.A. at the University five years later. We have a picture of him in his early days. He was, says Chettle, "of face amible, of body well proportioned, his attire after the habite of scholler-like gentleman, only his haire was somewhat long." There is nothing here about the famous beard which was such a noted feature of Greene's in after years—"a jolly red peake, like the spire of a steeple hee cherisht continually without cutting, where a man might hang a jewel, it was so sharp and pendant" (Nash).

"At my return into England," says Greene, "I ruffeled out in my silks, in the habit of malcontent; I seemed so discontent that no place would please me to abide in, nor no vocation cause mee to stay myselfe; but after I had by degrees proceeded Maister of Arts I left the Universitie and away to London; where (after I had continued some short time, and driven myself out of credit with sundry of frends) I became an author of playes, and a penner of love pamphlets, so that I soon grew famous in that qualitie, that who for that trade growne so ordinary about London as Robin Greene? Yong yet in years, though olde in wickedness, I began to resolve that there was nothing bad that

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was profitable, whereupon I grew so rooted in all mischief that I had as great delight in wickednesse as sundrie hath in godlinesse and as much felicitie I took in villainy as others had in honestie. . . . Nevertheless, I married a gentleman's daughter of good account, with whom I lived for a while : but for as much as she would persuade me from my wilful wickednes, I cast her off, having spent up the marriage money which I obtained by her. . . . Thus my misdemeanours (too many to be recited) caused the most part so much to despise me that in the end I became friendles, except it were in a few alehouses, who, commonly for my inordinate expences, would make much of me, until I were on the score, far more than ever I meant to pay, by twenty nobles thick." All this time Greene was living—wretchedly enough—by his pen, writing plays, stories, pamphlets, anything for which he could induce the booksellers to pay him a few shillings. "These vanities," he says, "and other trifling pamphlets penned of love and vaine fantasies was my chiefest stay of living ; and for these my vaine discourses I was beloved of the more vainer sort of people, who, being my continual companions, came still to my lodging, and there would continue quaffing, carousing and surfeting with me all the day long." Some money, also, he obtained in other ways. "I sought to furnish myself with coin, which I procured by cunning sleights from my father and my friends ; and my mother pampered me so long and secretly helped me to the

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oil of angels, so that I grew thereby prone to all mischiefs."

It is difficult to believe that in this account Greene does not exaggerate the wickedness of his life. His works are so noticeably free from grossness or immorality, his lyrics are so fresh and bright and pure, that we cannot imagine them proceeding from a man of really vicious character. A tall ragged fellow with rough head of hair and long red beard, who swaggered and bullied and brawled through the London streets, so that peacable citizens dreaded the name of Robin Greene ; whose home was in the most squalid by-ways of a city where even princes had not the means to live in a cleanliness such as to-day we regard as essential to the meanest ; whose life was spent in the sordid shifts which dire poverty imposes ; whose daily companions were sharpers and drunkards—this is the picture which his own confessions and the records of his time give of Robert Greene. But we cannot help thinking that there was another Robert Greene hidden away somewhere, a better self, untouched by the squalor of his outward life ; whose spirit dwelt among things pure and lovely, who delighted in fresh country scenes, in the song of birds and the scent of flowers ; who was childlike and gentle, kind, and innocent of all evil. Where could a mere city-dweller find the inspiration which prompted " Samela," and how could one the breath of whose life was clamour and disturbance write the calm and beautiful " Sweet are the thoughts that savour



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of content," the tender " Ah, were she pitiful ? "  
and the blithe " Ah, what is love ? "

## SAMELA

Like to Diana in her summer weed,  
Girt with a crimson robe of brightest dye,  
Goes fair Samela ;

Whiter than be the flocks that straggling feed,  
When washed by Arethusa faint they lie,  
Is fair Samela ;

As fair Aurora in her morning grey,  
Decked with the ruddy glisten of her love,  
Is fair Samela ;

Like lovely Thetis on a calmèd day,  
When as her brightness Neptune's fancy move,  
Shines fair Samela ;

Her tresses gold, her eyes like glassy streams,  
Her teeth are pearl, the breasts are ivory  
Of fair Samela ;

Her cheeks, like rose and lily yield forth gleams,  
Her brow's bright arches framed of ebony ;  
Thus fair Samela

Passeth fair Venus in her bravest hue,  
And Juno in the show of majesty,  
For she's Samela,

Pallas in wit ; all three, if you well view,  
For beauty, wit, and matchless dignity  
Yield to Samela.

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## AH, WERE SHE PITIFUL

(From "Pandosto")

Ah, were she pitiful as she is fair,  
Or but as mild as she is seeming so,  
Then were my hopes greater than my despair,  
Then all the world were heaven, nothing woe.

Ah, were her heart relenting as her hand,  
That seems to melt even with the mildest touch,  
Then knew I where to seat me in a land,  
Under wide heavens, but yet (I know) not such.

So as she shows, she seems the budding rose,  
Yet sweeter far than is an earthly flower,  
Sovereign of beauty, like the spray she grows,  
Compassed she is with thorns and cankered  
flower,  
Yet were she willing to be plucked and worn,  
She would be gathered, though she grew on thorn.

## SWEET ARE THE THOUGHTS

(From "Farewell to Folly")

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content ;  
The quiet mind is richer than a crown ;  
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent ;  
The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown :  
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such  
bliss,  
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest ;  
The cottage that affords no pride nor care ;  
The mean that 'grees with country music best ;  
The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare ;

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Obscurèd life sets down a type of bliss :  
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

## THE SHEPHERD'S WIFE'S SONG

(From "The Morning Garment")

Ah, what is love ? It is a pretty thing,  
As sweet unto a shepherd as a king ;

And sweeter too :

For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,  
And cares can make the sweetest love to frown :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

His flocks are folded, he comes home at night,  
As merry as a king in his delight ;

And merrier too :

For kings bethink them what the state require,  
While shepherds careless carol by the fire :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

He kisseth first, then sits as blithe to eat  
His cream and curds as doth the king his meat ;

And blither too :

For kings have often fears when they do sup,  
Where shepherds dread no poison in their cup.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Upon his couch of straw he sleeps as sound  
As doth a king upon his bed of down ;

More sounder too :

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

For cares cause kings full oft their sleep to spill,  
Where weary shepherds lie and snort their fill :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Thus with his wife he spends the year, as blithe  
As doth the king at every tide or sithe :

And blither too :

For kings have wars and broils to take in hand,  
When shepherds laugh and love upon the land :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Greene at any rate had the power of winning genuine love from his associates. Thomas Nash, who belonged to the same company of poets and who shared in the last carouse which brought on Greene's death, defended him valiantly against attacks made on his memory. "A good fellowe hee was," says Nash, "hee made no account of winning credite by his workes, as thou dost, that dost no good works." The poor shoemaker in whose house Greene was lodging at the time of his death sheltered and, as far as his own extreme poverty would permit, nursed and tended him. Greene's last message to his wife concerned this man. "Doll, I charge thee, by the love of our youth, and by my soule's rest, that thou wilt see this man paide ; for if hee and his wife had not succoured me, I had died in the streete." So at the age of thirty-two died Robert Greene.

## A N D T H E I R P O E T R Y

Christopher Marlowe, the greatest and most original genius among the University wits, had a career which was even briefer and more tragic than that of Robert Greene. He was the son of a shoemaker and was born at Canterbury, 1564. He was educated at the King's School, Canterbury, and from there he gained a scholarship which took him to the University of Cambridge. Somewhere about 1587 he came to London, and seems at first to have gained his living as an actor in the Lord Admiral's company. Like Shakespeare, he was at first employed in touching up old plays, but very soon he began to write on his own account. His wild and stormy genius produced works which completely carried away his Elizabethan audiences, ready as they were to respond to any appeal to the emotions. The critics might pronounce his plays to be merely turbulent and bombastic, and declare that they offended against all the accepted laws of the drama. The people applauded, and Marlowe went on producing in rapid succession his four great tragedies. To him belongs the credit of originating the movement which gave us a national drama.

As a lyric poet Marlowe occupies a less important position. The long poem of "Hero and Leander" is not a lyric in the sense that the term is applied in this book. The only "song" of Marlowe's which we possess is the graceful "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love," already referred to in connection with Sir Walter Raleigh.

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## THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

Come live with me, and be my love ;  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,  
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,  
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks  
By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,  
And a thousand fragrant posies ;  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle ;

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull ;  
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold ;

A belt of straw and ivy-buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs :  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherd-swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning :  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me, and be my love.

Marlowe's reputation for drunken and dissolute living was, whether justly or not we do not

## AND THEIR POETRY

know, worse than that of any of his companions. Atheism was, by public report, added to his list of offences. In Elizabethan days this was regarded as a much graver matter than any irregularity of life. It was so far taken seriously in Marlowe's case that he was cited before the Privy Council to answer to the charges brought against him. But before the examination could take place Marlowe's career was ended. He was killed in a brawl with a serving-man at a low tavern in Deptford, June 1, 1593, being then only twenty-nine years old. He was buried in the parish church, and the record in the register runs, "Christopher Marlowe, slain by Francis Archer."

George Peele was the son of a London silversmith, but descended from a good Devonshire family. We do not know whether he himself had ever visited the home of his fathers, but his fondness for Devonshire comparisons shows that he had at least felt the attraction of its beauties and suffered his thoughts to dwell lovingly upon them. He was educated at Oxford, and, coming to London about 1580, he settled there as actor, playwright and miscellaneous writer. Later we hear of him living in a house on Bankside, near the Globe Theatre, with his wife and daughter. Greene in his various "Confessions" refers to Peele as having shared in the riotous disorderly life there described. Tradition says that he wrote a large number of plays, and we can only explain the very high estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries by supposing that

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those which have been lost possessed far greater merit than those which have come down to us. "And thou, Peele," writes Greene, "no less deserving than the other two" (Marlowe and Lodge), "in some things rarer, in nothing inferiour, driven, as myselfe, to extreame shifts." The judgment of later critics does not confirm this verdict. Only occasionally does Peele catch the true Elizabethan note. His "Fair and Fair and Twice so Fair" is a song such as a happy child might sing upon a holiday morning.

### FAIR AND FAIR

(From "The Arraignment of Paris")

She :

Fair and fair, and twice so fair,  
As fair as any may be ;  
The fairest shepherd on our green,  
A love for any lady.

He :

Fair and fair, and twice so fair,  
As fair as any may be ;  
Thy love is fair for thee alone,  
And for no other lady.

She :

My love is fair, my love is gay,  
As fresh as bin the flowers in May,  
And of my love my roundelay  
My merry merry merry roundelay,  
Concludes with Cupid's curse,—  
They that do change old love for new.  
Pray gods they change for worse !  
My love can pipe, my love can sing,



# AND THEIR POETRY

My love can many a pretty thing,  
And of his lovely praises ring  
My merry merry roundelays,  
Amen to Cupid's curse,—  
They that do change old love for new,  
Pray gods they change for worse.

The poem "His Golden Locks Time hath to Silver Turned," which was probably written by Peele, is taken from "Polyhymnia, Describing the Honourable Triumph at Tylt before her Maiestie on the 17 of November past (1590), being the first day of the three and thirtieth year of her Highnesse raigne." "Certain yearly Triumphs were solemnized in memory of the applause of her Majesty's subjects at the day of her most happy accession to the Crown of England, which triumphs were first begun and occasioned by the right virtuous and honourable Sir Henry Lea, Master of her Highness' armoury; who of his great zeal and desire to eternize the glory of her Majesty's Court, voluntarily vowed—unless infirmity, age or other accident did impeach him—during his life to present himself at the tilt, armed, the day aforesaid, yearly; there to perform in honour of her Sacred Majesty the promise he formerly made. The worthy knight, however, feeling himself at length overtaken with old age, and being desirous of resigning his championship, did present himself together with the Earl of Cumberland unto her Majesty under her gallery window in the tilt yard at Westminster, where at that time her Majesty did sit. . . . Her Majesty beholding these

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armed knights coming toward her, did suddenly hear a music so sweet and secret, as every one thereat did greatly marvel. The music aforesaid was accompanied by these verses. After the ceremonies, Sir Henry Lea disarmed himself, and kneeling upon his knees presented the Earl of Cumberland, humbly beseeching that she would receive him for her knight to continue the yearly exercise aforesaid. Her Majesty having accepted the offer, this aged knight armed the earl, and mounted him upon his horse. That being done, he put upon his own person a side-coat of black velvet and covered his head in lieu of an helmet with a button cap of the country fashion."

### FAREWELL TO ARMS

His golden locks time hath to silver turned ;  
O time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing !  
His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurned,  
But spurned in vain ; youth waneth by increasing :  
Beauty, strength, youth, are flowers but fading seen ;  
Duty, faith, love, are roots and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,  
And, lovers' sonnets turned to holy psalms,  
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,  
And feed on prayers, which are age his alms :  
But though from court to cottage he depart,  
His saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song,  
" Blessed be the hearts that wish my sovereign well,  
Cursed be the souls that think her any wrong ! "

# AND THEIR POETRY

Goddess, allow this agèd man his right,  
To be your beadsman now that was your knight.

This song is quoted by Thackeray in "The Newcomes" (Ch. LXXV), with reference to Colonel Newcome becoming a pensioner at Greyfriars.

Peele is said by Francis Meres in his "Pallades Tamia," 1598, to have died of the plague or "pox," but we do not know when his death took place.

Two other members of this band are Thomas Nash and Thomas Dekker. These two belong in point of time rather to the later group of writers, but are so closely connected by the character of their work and of their lives with Greene, Marlowe and Lodge, that it seems better to include them in the same company. Few particulars concerning their lives are known, but they have left us a mass of miscellaneous literature—tracts, pamphlets, lampoons, satires, stories, plays, lyrics—from which can be gathered much information concerning their characters and adventures. They were, it would appear, reckless, dissipated, jovial, with an unconquerable buoyancy of temper, and an effrontery which could not be abashed. They had a close familiarity with life in the foul and teeming streets of London, and a wonderful power of describing it. Their home was alternately a cellar in one of these streets and a debtor's prison; they were habituated to misery in its most squalid and revolting forms, to vice and crime unrelieved by any touch of romance.

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Yet even if their words were sharp their hearts remained tender, their sympathies quick and active, they had eyes to see virtue in the meanest guise and a kindly humour which delighted in the odd, unusual and generally despised specimens of humanity. Their works are so full of detailed descriptions of the life led in the poorer quarters of Elizabethan London that they are of great value to the historian of the period. Yet Nash could write a fresh country lyric like "Spring, the Sweet Spring."

### SPRING, THE SWEET SPRING

(From "Summer's Last Will and Testament")

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king ;  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring :  
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo !

The palm and may make country houses gay,  
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,  
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo !

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,  
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,  
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo !  
Spring ! the sweet Spring !

Dekker's songs are marked by a peaceful beauty which one finds very hard to reconcile with the character of their writer.

# AND THEIR POETRY

## HAYMAKERS, RAKERS

(From "Sun's Darling")

Haymakers, rakers, reapers and mowers,  
Wait on your Summer-Queen !  
Dress up with musk-rose her eglantine bowers,  
Daffodils strew the green !  
Sing, dance and play,  
'Tis holiday !  
The sun does bravely shine  
On our ears of corn.  
Rich as a pearl  
Comes every girl.  
This is mine, this is mine, this is mine.  
Let us die ere away they be borne.

Bow to our Sun, to our Queen, and that fair one  
Come to behold our sports ;  
Each bonny lass here is counted a rare one,  
As those in princes' courts.  
These and we  
With country glee,  
Will teach the woods to resound,  
And the hills with echoes hollow.  
Skipping lambs  
Their bleating dams  
'Mongst kids shall trip it round ;  
For joy thus our wenches we follow.

Wind, jolly huntsmen, your neat bugles shrilly,  
Hounds make a lusty cry ;  
Spring up, you falconers, partridges freely,  
Then let your brave hawks fly !  
Horses amain,  
Over ridge, over plain,

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

The dogs have the stag in chase :

'Tis a sport to content a king.

So ho ! ho ! through the skies

How the proud bird flies,

And sousing, kills with a grace !

Now the deer falls ; hark ! how they ring.

## GOLDEN SLUMBERS

(From " Patient Grisel ")

Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,  
Smiles awake you when you rise.

Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry  
And I will sing a lullaby.

Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

Care is heavy, therefore sleep you,  
You are care, and care must keep you.

Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,  
And I will sing a lullaby.

Rock them, rock them, lullaby

## SWEET CONTENT

(From " Patient Grisel ")

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers ?

O sweet Content !

Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed ?

O Punishment !

Dost laugh to see how fools are vexed

To add to golden numbers golden numbers ?

O sweet Content, O sweet, O sweet Content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace,

Honest labour bears a lovely face.

Then hey noney, noney ; hey noney, noney.

# A N D T H E I R P O E T R Y

Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring ?

O sweet Content !

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own  
tears ?

O Punishment !

Then he that patiently want's burden bears

No burden bears, but is a king, a king.

O sweet Content, O sweet, O sweet Content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace,

Honest labour bears a lovely face.

Then hey noney, noney ; hey noney, noney.

The only one of the University wits who seems to have passed safely through the boisterous days of youth and reached a quiet, respectable old age was Thomas Lodge. His father was a prosperous London citizen who had held the office of Lord Mayor. The son was hopelessly out of sympathy with his environment. From his early years he preferred poetry to business, and when about 1576 he left Oxford University he became totally estranged from his family, and went out into the world on his own account to seek his fortune by literature. His life was varied by several voyages to distant parts of the world, and the influence of his foreign experiences is very evident in his work. His pastoral romance of "Rosalynde," on which Shakespeare's "As You Like It" is founded, and which contains some of its author's best lyrics, he composed while on a voyage to the Canaries. Of all the Elizabethans there is not one more tuneful than Lodge. He possessed pre-eminently the gift of song and gave to his lyrics that magic lilt which

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

makes them sing themselves to happy measures in the brains of all who hear them. Lodge put into them all the brightness and beauty of the tropical scenes which had strongly impressed his imagination, and nothing at all of the squalor and dinginess with which he was equally, if not more familiar in the London streets.

## ROSALYNDE'S MADRIGAL

(From "Rosalynde")

Love in my bosom, like a bee,  
Doth suck his sweet :  
Now with his wings he plays with me,  
Now with his feet.

Within mine eyes he makes his nest,  
His bed amidst my tender breast ;  
My kisses are his daily feast,  
And yet he robs me of my rest :  
Ah ! wanton, will ye ?

And if I sleep, then percheth he  
With pretty flight,  
And makes his pillow of my knee  
The livelong night. "

Strike I my lute, he tunes the string ;  
He music plays if so I sing ;  
He lends me every lovely thing,  
Yet cruel he my heart doth sting :  
Whist, wanton, still ye ?

Else I with roses every day  
Will whip you hence,  
And bind you, when you long to play,  
For your offence ;



# A N D T H E I R P O E T R Y

I'll shut my eyes to keep you in ;  
I'll make you fast it for your sin ;  
I'll count your power not worth a pin :  
Alas ! what hereby shall I win,  
If he gainsay me ?

What if I beat the wanton boy  
With many a rod ?  
He will repay me with annoy,  
Because a god.  
Then sit thou safely on my knee,  
And let thy bower my bosom be ;  
Lurk in mine eyes, I like of thee,  
O Cupid ! So thou pity me,  
Spare not but play thee.

## TO PHYLLIS THE FAIR SHEPHERDESS

My Phyllis hath the morning Sun,  
At first to look upon her ;  
And Phyllis hath morn-waking birds,  
Her rising still to honour.  
My Phyllis hath prime-feathered flowers,  
That smile when she treads on them ;  
And Phyllis hath a gallant flock,  
That leaps since she doth own them.  
But Phyllis hath too hard a heart,  
Alas, that she should have it !

It yields no mercy to desert,  
Nor grace to those that crave it.  
Sweet Sun, when thou look'st on,  
Pray her regard my moan !  
Sweet birds, when you sing to her,  
To yield some pity, woo her !

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Sweet flowers, that she treads on,  
Tell her her beauty deads one.  
And if in life her love she nill agree me,  
Pray her before I die, she will come see me.

### A TURTLE SAT UPON A LEAFLESS TREE

(From "Rosalynde")

A Turtle sat upon a leafless tree,  
Mourning her absent pheer  
With sad and sorry cheer :  
About her wondering stood  
The citizens of wood,  
And whilst her plumes she rents,  
And for her love laments,  
The stately trees complain them,  
The birds with sorrow pain them ;  
Each one that doth her view,  
Her pain and sorrows rue ;  
But were the sorrows known  
That me hath overthrown,  
Oh, how would Phœbe sigh, if she did look on me ?  
The lovesick Polypheme that could not see,  
Who on the barren shore,  
His fortunes doth deplore,  
And melteth all in moan  
For Galatea gone ;  
And with his piteous cries,  
Afflicts both earth and skies  
And to his woe betook,  
Doth break both pipe and hook :  
For whom complains the morn,  
For whom the Sea Nymphs mourn ;  
Alas, his pain is nought ;  
For were my woe but thought  
Oh, how would Phœbe sigh, if she did look on me ?

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Beyond compare my pain :  
Yet glad am I  
If gentle Phœbe deign  
To see her Montan die.

Lodge outlived all his wild companions and in his sober middle age settled down as a physician. He lived through the reign of James I, and died in his seventieth year of the plague, at Low Leyton, Essex.

Though there is much in the lives of the University poets that is squalid and degrading, in their poetry there is no hint of such. With them imagination burnt as a pure leaping flame, fed from within and not from without. They deserve their place in that "Grove of Bay Trees" which Thomas Dekker has imagined for them. "There is a grove," he says, "which stands by itselfe like an island; for a streame (that makes musicke in the running) clasps it round about like a hoope-girdle of christall; lawrells grow so thick on all the banks of it, that lightning itselfe, if it come thither, hath no power to pierce through them. It seemes, without, a desolate unfrequented wood, for those within are retyrd into themselves; but from them come forth such harmonious sounds that birds build nests only in the trees there to teach tunes to their young ones prettily. This is called the Grove of Bay-Trees, and to this consort-roume resort none but the children of Phœbus, poets and musitions; the one creates the ditty, and gives it the life or number, the other lends it

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voÿce and makes it speak musike. When these happy spirits sit asunder their bodies are like so many starres ; and when they joyne together in severall troopes they show like so many heavenly constellations. Full of pleasant bowers and quaint arboures is all this walke. . . . Marlow, Greene and Peele had got under the shade of a large vyne, laughing to see Nash (that was but newly come to their colledge) still haunted with the sharpe and satyrical spirit that followed him heere upon earth."

### VIII

**T**HERE is another later group of Elizabethan lyrists to the members of which the title "University Wits" is almost as justly applicable as to those just dealt with. This group consists of Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Heywood, Ford and Shirley. The greater part of the work of these poets was done in the reign of James I, but in spirit it belonged to the great age which had passed with the great Queen. The literary tradition was faithfully handed on, and Shirley's "No Armour against Fate" might be placed beside Shakespeare's "Fear no more the heat o' the Sun," published fifty years before, and recognized as a blood relation, though a humble one. Something of the freshness and spontaneity of the earlier time had gone, but the glow and vigour, the versatility which could make a tuneful song

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on any subject, grave or gay, the alluring grace and the lilting measure were still there.

The personality which dominated this group—which dominated, indeed, the whole of literary London during the first quarter of the seventeenth century—was the personality of Ben Jonson. He had gained his position as literary Dictator only after persistent struggles with the obstacles that fate had put in his way. He was of good though decayed family. Fuller, who included Ben Jonson in his "Worthies of England," tells us that with all his industry he could not find the poet "in his cradle," but he found him in his "longcoats," a little child in Harts-horn Lane, Charing Cross. Soon after the death of Jonson's father his mother married a master-bricklayer. It has been said that the boy was treated with great harshness, even brutality, by this stepfather, but there seems to be no foundation for the statement. His mother, we know, was a woman of great determination and a proud spirit, who early recognized the elements of greatness in her son.

By the kindness of a friend of the family Jonson was sent to Westminster School, where he came under the influence of William Camden, then the second master. Jonson always gratefully recognized the benefits he had gained from this famous man

From Westminster School Jonson gained a scholarship to Cambridge, about 1589. But he did not remain at the University more than a few months. It is probable that the income of

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his scholarship was not enough to maintain him there, and he could get no supplementary allowance from his home. After leaving the University he worked for a short time at his stepfather's trade, but, as he tells us, he "could not endure the occupation of a bricklayer," and at the earliest moment possible he escaped from it, making his way to Flanders, where he became a volunteer soldier in the English army fighting there. Before he was twenty he was back again in London. For some years he gained a precarious living as Marlowe and Shakespeare had done before him, by working in various capacities for the London theatres. He may, though we are not sure of this, have been an actor; he was certainly employed in altering and touching up plays already in the possession of the theatrical company; and he proceeded naturally to original dramatic work.

Jonson at this time probably led a wild and irregular life which brought him at least on one occasion into serious difficulty. In 1598 he fought a duel with an actor, Gabriel Spencer, and killed his opponent. He was arrested and sentenced to death, but escaped by pleading "benefit of clergy."

In the same year his first important comedy, "Every Man in his Humour," was played by the company of the Lord Chamberlain. To this company Shakespeare belonged, and one of the chief parts in Jonson's comedy was acted by him. The production of this play gave Jonson a high position as a playwright.

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His next comedy, "Cynthia's Revels," was a satire on the manners of the Court. It contains two of his most beautiful songs—"Queen and Huntress" and "Slow, slow, fresh fount."

## ECHO'S LAMENT OF NARCISSUS

(From "Cynthia's Revels")

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears :  
Yet slower, yet ; O faintly, gentle springs :  
List to the heavy part the music bears,  
Woe weeps out her division when she sings.  
Droop herbs and flowers,  
Fall grief in showers,  
Our beauties are not ours ;  
O, I could still,  
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,  
Drop, drop, drop, drop,  
Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

## HYMN TO DIANA

(From "Cynthia's Revels")

Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair  
State in wonted manner keep :  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose ;  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close :  
Bless us then with wishèd sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

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Lay thy bow of pearl apart  
And thy crystal-shining quiver ;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever :  
Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
Goddess excellently bright !

In 1603 he produced his first tragedy, "Sejanus." The accession of James I seemed at first to promise increased prosperity to Ben Jonson. The new king was a scholar, and the classical learning which Ben Jonson, in spite of the unfavourable circumstances of his career, had managed to accumulate attracted his attention. But Jonson nearly lost all hope of royal favour through the play "Eastward Ho!" in which he had collaborated with Chapman and Marston. Some passages in the play reflecting on the "industrious Scots" displeased the King, and the three authors were sent to prison. They were soon released, however, and Jonson was readmitted to favour. He was commissioned to write masques and to organize pageants for the Court. The Queen was very fond of spectacular displays, and musicians, architects and poets were all employed in ministering to her taste. Jonson's masques were wonderfully contrived, and contained many fine poetic passages. At the same time he was doing better work in the series of comedies which he produced between 1605 and 1616. Not many lyrics are to be found in these plays. Jonson worked according to classical models, and he had not, except in rare instances, the light touch and



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graceful fancy necessary to song-making. One song, however, from "The Silent Woman," has qualities of terseness and tunefulness which have given it wide popularity.

## STILL TO BE NEAT

(From "The Silent Woman")

Still to be neat, still to be drest,  
As you were going to a feast ;  
Still to be powdered, still perfumed :  
Lady, it is to be presumed,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace ;  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free :  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all the adulteries of art :  
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

In 1616 Jonson was made poet laureate, with a pension of a hundred marks. From this time until 1625 he wrote nothing for the stage. His health seems to have begun to fail. He became large and unwieldy in bulk, and the habit of excessive drinking increased upon him. He was still held in favour at Court, and his pension was more or less regularly paid. He had besides many influential friends, and his life was passed strangely enough between the country houses of English gentlemen, where he was received as an honoured guest, and lodgings in the dirty, teeming streets of the poorer quarter of London, where he drank and revelled with his companions.

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In 1615 we hear of Jonson at the celebrated meetings at the Mermaid Tavern in Fleet Street. Sir Walter Raleigh had founded a society which met to discuss dramatic and literary topics at this tavern ; and now, while he was engaged in a last desperate endeavour to retrieve his fortunes in Guiana, there came to the Mermaid the two great poets whose fame had grown up during his long captivity. Fuller tells us in his "Worthies" something about these meetings. "Many were the wit-combats," he says, "betwixt him (Shakespeare) and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war ; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." We can fancy how the lesser wits who gathered round these two great central figures were dazzled and delighted with what they heard. Beaumont, in his poetical "Letter" to Ben Jonson, says :

What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid ? heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life.

Much has been said of the enmity and jealousy

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shown by Jonson toward Shakespeare, but if the records of the relations between the two poets are examined there is seen to be little foundation for such a charge ; on the contrary, they seem always to have been on terms of kindly and appreciative friendship. Jonson was by nature of a rough and hasty temper. He was also intensely critical, and a disparaging word came from him far more readily than a note of praise. What he really thought of Shakespeare is to be found in the beautiful lines, " To the Memory of my Beloved Master William Shakespeare," which contains praise as generous as it is discriminating. Jonson probably owed his first great literary success to Shakespeare, for a fairly reliable tradition tells us that it was to Shakespeare's influence that the acceptance of " Every Man in his Humour " was due. Shakespeare was godfather to one of Ben Jonson's children ; and in the spring of 1616 Jonson was entertained by Shakespeare at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon. Michael Drayton was also a guest, and the three poets, we are told, " had a merry meeting," but " itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted."

After the death of Shakespeare, Jonson reigned supreme at the Mermaid, and afterwards at the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street, to which the club was removed. He became a kind of literary Dictator, and grew more hectoring and intolerant in manner as time went on. His bodily infirmities increased and he did little

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

work. At last he became quite bedridden, and died in 1637. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and owes the unique and beautiful inscription placed upon his tomb to a happy chance. Sir John Young, of Great Milton, Oxfordshire, chanced to pass through the Abbey as the tomb was being made, and gave one of the workmen eighteenpence to cut the words, "O rare Ben Jonson!"

A collected edition of Ben Jonson's lyrics was published in 1616 under the title of "The Forest." Two of the songs contained in that collection may be quoted here, as exemplifying two characteristics of his work. The first, the well-known "Drink to me only," shows the wonderfully skilful way in which he manipulated and transformed the classical material he used so freely. The material in this case is one of the love-letters of the Greek Sophist, Philostratus. "Drink to me with thine eyes alone; and if thou wilt, apply thy lips and fill the cup with kisses, and so give it to me. When I behold thee, I thirst, even with the cup in my hands; and it is not this that I touch with my lips, but I know that I drink of thee. I have sent thee a wreath of roses, not to honour thee (though this too was in my mind), but out of favour to the roses themselves, that so they may not wither. And if thou wilt do a favour to thy lover, send back what remains of them, smelling no longer of roses, but only of thee." From this Jonson made his charming lyric.

# AND THEIR POETRY

## DRINK TO ME ONLY

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine ;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,  
Doth ask a drink divine :  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee,  
As giving it a hope, that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me :  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself, but thee.

The second example is one of the epitaphs for which Ben Jonson was so justly famous, "On Salathiel Pavy, a child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel." Salathiel is said to have died about 1601. He was one of the most talented of the child-players trained to act before the Court, and had taken part in two plays written by Ben Jonson.

## AN EPITAPH ON SALATHIEL PAVY

A Child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel

Weep with me, all you that read  
This little story ;  
And know, for whom a tear you shed  
Death's self is sorry.

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'Twas a child that so did thrive  
In grace and feature,  
As Heaven and Nature seemed to strive  
Which owned the creature.  
Years he numberd scarce thirteen  
When Fates turned cruel,  
Yet three filled zodiacs had he been  
The stage's jewel ;  
And did act, what now we moan,  
Old men so duly,  
As, sooth, the Parcæ thought him one,—  
He played so truly.  
So, by error to his fate  
They all consented ;  
But viewing him since, alas, too late  
They have repented ;  
And have sought to give new birth  
In baths to steep him ;  
But being so much too good for earth  
Heaven vows to keep him.

John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont were both followers of "rare Ben Jonson," and Beaumont was his intimate friend. The two afford us our best example of a literary partnership. Fletcher was the elder of the two. His father was a clergyman of Rye in Sussex, and afterwards became chaplain to Mary Queen of Scots and subsequently Bishop of London. He was educated at Cambridge, and settled in London somewhere about 1607. In London he met Francis Beaumont, son of Sir Francis Beaumont, of Grace Dieu in Leicestershire. Beaumont was an Oxford man, and had been entered at the Inner Temple in 1600. The two

## AND THEIR POETRY

poets, as tradition says, lived in the same house, in that favourite quarter of actors, Bankside, having everything, even a single cloak, in common. Beaumont inherited a considerable property, but he seems to have preferred the Bohemian life of a London dramatist to any more dignified manner of existence.

It is difficult to say which part of their joint work is to be attributed to each of the collaborators. Beaumont has the higher, graver genius and the fine lines "On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey" are certainly his.

### ON THE TOMBS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Mortality, behold and fear !  
What a change of flesh is here !  
Think how many royal bones  
Sleep within this heap of stones ;  
Here they lie had realms and lands,  
Who now want strength to stir their hands ;  
Where from their pulpits seal'd with dust  
They preach, " In greatness is no trust."'  
Here's an acre sown indeed  
With the richest, royall'st seed  
That the earth did e'er suck in,  
Since the first man died for sin :  
Here the bones of birth have cried,  
" Though gods they were, as men they died " :  
Here are sands, ignoble things,  
Dropt from the ruin'd sides of kings :  
Here's a world of pomp and state,  
Buried in dust, once dead by fate.

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Fletcher possessed pre-eminently the lyric gift. Songs on every subject, grave or gay, seemed to flow naturally from his pen. Most of the lyrics in the joint dramas we may safely attribute to him.

“ Lay a garland on my hearse ” was probably written by Beaumont and Fletcher in collaboration, and of “ Roses, their sharp spines being gone ” tradition ascribes a part to Shakespeare, who is known to have written some parts of the play “ The Two Noble Kinsmen, ” in which it occurs.

## LAY A GARLAND

(From “ The Maid’s Tragedy ”)

Lay a garland on my hearse  
Of the dismal yew :  
Maidens, willow branches bear ;  
Say, I died true.

My love was false, but I was firm  
From my hour of birth.  
Upon my buried body lie  
Lightly, gentle earth.

## SONG TO BACCHUS

(From “ Valentinian ”)

God Lyæus, ever young,  
Ever honoured, ever sung ;  
Stained with blood of lusty grapes  
In a thousand lusty shapes,  
Dance upon the mazer’s brim,  
In the crimson liquor swim ;  
From thy plenteous hand divine  
Let a river run with wine ;



# AND THEIR POETRY

God of youth, let this day here  
Enter neither care nor fear.

## INVOCATION TO SLEEP

(From "Valentinian")

Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,  
Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose  
On this afflicted prince ; fall like a cloud  
In gentle showers ; give nothing that is loud  
Or painful to his slumbers ;—easy, sweet,  
And as a purling stream, thou son of night,  
Pass by his troubled senses ; sing his pain  
Like hollow murmuring wind or silver rain ;  
Into this prince gently, oh gently slide,  
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride !

## HENCE, ALL YOU VAIN DELIGHTS

(From "The Nice Valour")

Hence, all you vain delights,  
As short as are the nights  
Wherein you spend your folly !  
There's nought in this life sweet  
If man were wise to see't,  
But only melancholy ;  
O sweetest melancholy !

Welcome, folded arms and fixèd eyes,  
A sigh that piercing mortifies,  
A look that's fastened to the ground,  
A tongue chained up without a sound !  
Fountain heads and pathless groves,  
Places which pale passion loves !  
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls  
Are warmly housed save bats and owls !

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

A midnight bell, a parting groan;  
These are the sounds we feed upon ;  
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley :  
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

## WEEP NO MORE

(From " The Queen of Corinth ")

Weep no more, nor sigh, nor groan ;  
Sorrow calls no time that's gone ;  
Violets plucked the sweetest rain  
Makes not fresh nor grow again ;  
Trim thy locks, look cheerfully ;  
Fate's hid ends eyes cannot see ;  
Joys as wingèd dreams fly fast,  
Why should sadness longer last ?  
Grief is but a wound to woe ;  
Gentlest fair, mourn, mourn no mo.

## ROSES, THEIR SHARP SPINES BEING GONE

(From " Two Noble Kinsmen ")

Roses, their sharp spines being gone  
Not royal in their smells alone,  
    But in their hue ;  
Maiden-pinks of odour faint,  
Daisies smell-less yet most quaint,  
    And sweet thyme true ;

Primrose, first-born child of Ver,  
Merry spring-time's harbinger,  
    With her bells dim ;  
Oxlips in their cradles growing,  
Marigolds on death-beds blowing,  
    Larks'-heels trim.

# AND THEIR POETRY

All, dear Nature's children sweet,  
Lie 'fore bride and bridegroom's feet,  
    Blessing their sense !  
Not an angel of the air,  
Bird melodious or bird fair,  
    Be absent hence !

The crow, the slanderous cuckoo, nor  
The boding raven, nor chough hoar,  
    Nor chattering pie,  
May on our bride-house perch or sing,  
Or with them any discord bring  
    But from it fly !

Beaumont died in 1616, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Fletcher lived until 1625.

Thomas Heywood was born in 1574, of a good Lincolnshire family. He followed the usual course of the University wits—went to Cambridge, settled in London, began miscellaneous work in connection with the theatre and proceeded to the writing of plays. He is said to have written altogether about two hundred and twenty plays, which were composed in taverns with lightning rapidity. The beautiful song "Pack, clouds, away" gives him his chief claim to remembrance as a lyric poet.

## PACK, CLOUDS, AWAY

(From "The Rape of Lucrece") ?

Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,  
With night we banish sorrow ;  
Sweet air blow soft, mount larks aloft  
To give my Love good-morrow !

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Wings from the wind to please her mind,  
Notes from the lark I'll borrow ;  
Bird, prune thy wing, nightingale sing,  
To give my Love good-morrow ;  
To give my Love good-morrow  
Notes from them both I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, Robin-red-breast,  
Sing birds in every furrow ;  
And from each hill, let music shrill  
Give my fair Love good-morrow !  
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,  
Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow !  
You pretty elves, amongst yourselves  
Sing my fair Love good-morrow ;  
To give my Love good-morrow  
Sing, birds, in every furrow.

John Ford came from Devonshire. He went to Oxford and was admitted to the Middle Temple, 1602. He wrote prose tracts and other miscellaneous works for some years before he began the composition of the dramas on which his fame depends. The first lyric here given is taken from his play "The Broken Heart," the second from "The Lover's Melancholy."

## CALANTHA'S DIRGE

(From "The Broken Heart")

Glories, pleasures, pomps, delights and ease,  
Can but please  
Outward senses, when the mind  
Is or untroubled, or by peace refined.  
Crowns may flourish and decay,  
Beauties shine, but fade away.

# AND THEIR POETRY

Youth may revel, yet it must  
Lie down in a bed of dust.  
Earthly honours flow and waste,  
Time alone doth change and last.  
Sorrows mingled with contents prepare  
Rest for care ;  
Love only reigns in death ; though art  
Can find no comfort for a Broken Heart.

## AWAKENING SONG

(From "The Lover's Melancholy")

Fly hence, shadows, that do keep  
Watchful sorrows, charmed in sleep !  
Though the eyes be overtaken,  
Yet the heart doth ever waken  
Thoughts chained up in busy snares  
Of continual woes and cares :  
Love and griefs are so exprest,  
As they rather sigh than rest.  
Fly hence, shadows, that do keep  
Watchful sorrows, charmed in sleep.

James Shirley was not born until 1596, and so, by actual personal experience, knew nothing of the Elizabethan literary age. Yet in spirit and temper he is a true Elizabethan. Shirley was a Londoner, and was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School. From there he went to Oxford, where Laud was at that time President. The story goes that when it became known to him that Shirley wished to take holy orders Laud objected on the grounds that a man with a large mole on his face was not fit for such a

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

position. Shirley left Oxford and proceeded to Cambridge. After he left the University he was converted to Roman Catholicism and became a master at St. Albans Grammar School. Here he began to write comedies, in imitation of those of the great Elizabethans. His genius was essentially of the imitative type. "His claim to a place among the great poets of his age rests solely upon his wonderful manipulative dexterity, his power of assimilating and reshaping the creations of his great predecessors." He lived a quiet life, refusing the Court preferment which was within his reach. His fortunes fell with the fall of the king, Charles I, and he was driven to gain a living by teaching a small school and by literary drudgery. His house near Fleet Street was burnt in the great fire of 1666, and he and his wife both died from the fright they sustained at that time. With Shirley passed the last of the Elizabethans.

### VICTORIOUS MEN OF EARTH

(From "Cupid and Death")

Victorious men of earth, no more  
Proclaim how wide your empires are ;  
Though you bind in every shore,  
And your triumphs reach as far  
As night or day,  
Yet you, proud monarchs, must obey,  
And mingle with forgotten ashes when  
Death calls ye to the crowd of common men.

Devouring Famine, Plague, and War,  
Each able to undo mankind,

# AND THEIR POETRY

Death's servile emissaries are ;  
Nor to these alone confined,  
He hath at will  
More quaint and subtle ways to kill ;  
A smile or kiss, as he will use the art,  
Shall have the cunning skill to break a heart.

## NO ARMOUR AGAINST FATE

(From "The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses")

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things.  
There is no armour against fate ;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings :  
Sceptre and crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
And plant fresh laurels where they kill ;  
But their strong nerves at last must yield ;  
They tame but one another still :  
Early or late,  
They stoop to fate,  
And must give up their murmuring breath,  
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow,  
Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;  
Upon Death's purple altar now,  
See where the victor-victim bleeds :  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb ;  
Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

# THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

## IX

**T**HE very close connection which existed in Elizabethan times between music and lyric poetry can be demonstrated from the practice of the Courtly Makers and of the University Wits. The poets belonging to both these classes wrote their lyrics, in almost every case, with the definite idea of their being set to music. The poems were, primarily, songs ; and it is natural that this fact should have a considerable influence on their structure and character. There is little doubt that the musical tendencies of the age had something to do with the rare tunefulness, the wonderful singing quality which distinguishes the Elizabethan lyric from the lyric of any other age. The great advance which was made during this period in metrical arrangement, in form and structure, in concentration of meaning and purpose, gave to the lyric a new rank. It had previously been regarded mainly as a means of expression for minstrels and story-tellers who could string their rhymes together with a hasty and careless hand ; it now became an important and highly esteemed department of English verse, worthy of the pains and care of a great poet. Much, though of course not all, of this advance was due to the influence of music.

Ample evidence remains to show that the age of Elizabeth was one in which music, and more especially singing, was commonly practised by



## AND THEIR POETRY

all classes of the people. Musical instruments were to be found in the house of every gentleman and of every rich citizen. There are many references in the literature of the time to the practice of hanging up a lute or a cittern in the drawing-room of a house, that waiting visitors might beguile the time with music ; and to hang a musical instrument in a barber's shop for a similar purpose seems to have been an almost universal custom. " A cittern is as natural to a barber," says Gifford, " as milk to a calf, or dancing bears to a bagpiper."

Singing was even more common and more highly esteemed than instrumental music. " There is not any music of instruments whatsoever," wrote William Byrd, " comparable to that which is made by the voice of man " ; and with the " music made by the voice of man " Elizabethan England resounded. " Tinkers sang catches ; milkmaids sang ballads ; carters whistled ; each trade, and even the beggars, had their special songs. . . . They had music at dinner ; music at supper ; music at weddings ; music at funerals ; music at night ; music at dawn ; music at work ; and music at play " (Chappell). Peacham, in his " Compleat Gentleman," says : " I desire no more in you than to sing your part sure and at the first sight ; withal to play the same upon your viol, or the exercise of the Lute, privately to yourself." Morley, in his " History of Music," tells an anecdote which shows that some knowledge of musical art was deemed necessary, not only to

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the accomplished gentleman but also to the youth of the middle class. "Supper being ended, music books, as is the custom, were brought to the tables, the mistress of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing; but when after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I *could not*, every one began to wonder, yea some whispering to others demanding how I was brought up "

To supply the demand which this almost universal practice of singing created, various series of song books, containing both words and airs, were published. Some of the choicest lyrics of the age are to be found in these song-books. They include a considerable proportion of the lyrics already given in this book, many the authors of which are doubtful or entirely unknown, many written by the musicians who compiled them. Of the latter class Thomas Campion is the most notable example. He was the son of well-to-do middle-class parents, and was brought up in London. He was educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and on leaving the University in 1586 was entered as a student at Gray's Inn. Legal studies had, however, little attraction for him, and he very soon forsook them and devoted himself to music and poetry. In 1612 appeared his "Two Bookes of Ayres," followed in 1617 by the "Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres." "In these English ayres," Campion says, "I have chiefly aymed to couple my words and notes lovingly together, which will be much for him to do that hath not power

## AND THEIR POETRY

over both." He proved most conclusively that he himself had "power over both." His songs are true poems. Some, like "There is a garden in her face" and "Never love unless you can," are blithe, fresh and tuneful, full of the glad Elizabethan spirit; others, such as "When thou must home" and "The Man of Life Upright," have a more sober loveliness. In each case the poem was set to an air which reflected and heightened its characteristics, accentuated its meaning, and emphasized its melody.

### THERE IS A GARDEN IN HER FACE

There is a garden in her face  
Where roses and white lilies blow;  
A heavenly paradise is that place,  
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow;  
There cherries grow that none may buy  
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose  
Of orient pearl a double row,  
Which when her lovely laughter shows  
They look like rose-buds filled with snow.  
Yet them no peer nor prince may buy,  
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still;  
Her brows like bended bows do stand,  
Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill  
All that attempt with eye or hand  
These sacred cherries to come nigh,  
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry!

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## NEVER LOVE UNLESS YOU CAN

Never love unless you can  
Bear with all the faults of man !  
Men sometimes will jealous be  
Though but little cause they see  
And hang the head as discontent,  
And speak what straight they will repent.

Men, that but one Saint adore,  
Make a show of love to more ;  
Beauty must be scorned in none,  
Though but truly served in one :  
For what is courtship but disguise ?  
True hearts may have dissembling eyes.

Men, when their affairs require  
Must awhile themselves retire ;  
Sometimes hunt, and sometimes hawk,  
And not ever sit and talk :—  
If these and such-like you can bear,  
Then like, and love, and never fear !

## WHEN THOU MUST HOME

When thou must home to shades of under-ground,  
And there arrived, a new admirèd guest,  
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,  
White Iopé, blithe Helen, and the rest,  
To hear the stories of thy finished love  
From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move,

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,  
Of masques and revels which sweet youth did make,  
Of tourneys and great challenges of knights,  
And all these triumphs for thy beauty's sake ;

## A N D T H E I R P O E T R Y

When thou hast told these honours done to thee,  
Then tell, O tell, how thou didst murder me !

Campion was in his day a noted scholar and man of letters as well as a writer of popular lyrics. He forsook the profession of law in his youth, but in later life turned to medicine and became a "Doctor of Physicke." He wrote several treatises on musical subjects, and seems altogether to have had a full and busy life. He was a friend of Thomas Nash, though he never apparently joined in the excesses of the University Wits, and he was at one time in the service, probably in his capacity of "Doctor of Physicke," of Sir Thomas Monson, and through this connection was slightly involved in the Overbury poisoning case. He visited Sir Thomas Monson in prison, and gave evidence at the trial. The honourable acquittal of his patron may be held to clear Campion also of any complicity in this notorious crime.

Campion died of the plague in 1620, and was buried in St. Dunstan's Church. His name was almost unknown to modern readers until the researches of Mr. A. H. Bullen brought him, as well as many another forgotten Elizabethan poet, back to fame. Mr. Edmund Gosse commemorates both Bullen and Campion in his graceful verse :

Bullen, well done !

Where Campion lies in London-land,  
Lulled by the thunders of the Strand,  
Screened from the sun

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Surely there must  
Now pass some pleasant gleam  
Across his music-haunted dream,  
Whose brain and lute are dust.

Another famous series of song-books was that issued by William Byrd. He was one of the "gentlemen of the Queen's Majesty's honourable Chapel," and organist of Lincoln Cathedral. He composed several masses, and issued several song-books, which came out respectively in 1588, 1589 and 1611. He drew largely upon the lyrics written in the early part of Elizabeth's reign, though he included also specimens of contemporary verse. Byrd seems to have had a preference for poems of a serious and didactic character. "A Feignèd Friend" is one of the best in his collection.

## A FEIGNÈD FRIEND

A feignèd friend by proof I find  
To be a greater foe  
Than he that with a spiteful mind  
Doth seek my overthrow ;  
For of the one I can beware,  
With craft the other breeds my care.

Such men are like the hidden rocks  
Which in the seas doth lie,  
Against the which each ship that knocks  
Is drownèd suddenly :  
No greater fraud nor more unjust  
Than false deceit hid under trust.

## A N D T H E I R P O E T R Y

John Dowland is specially noted for his skill in playing upon the lute. He travelled during his youth in France and Germany, came home and took his degree as Bachelor of Music at Oxford in 1588, then set out on his travels again. For a time he was lutenist to the King of Denmark. On returning to England once more he published his three song-books, from which the following lyrics, "I saw my lady weep," "Weep you no more, sad fountains," are taken.

### I SAW MY LADY WEEP

I saw my lady weep,  
And Sorrow proud to be advanced so  
In those fair eyes where all perfections keep.  
Her face was full of woe,  
But such a woe (believe me) as wins more hearts  
Than Mirth can do with her enticing parts.

Sorrow was there made fair,  
And Passion, wise ; Tears, a delightful thing ;  
Silence, beyond all speech, a wisdom rare :  
She made her sighs to sing,  
And all things with so sweet a sadness move  
As made my heart at once both grieve and love.

O fairer than ought else  
The world can show, leave off in time to grieve !  
Enough, enough : your joyful look excels :  
Tears kill the heart, believe.  
O strive not to be excellent in woe,  
Which only breeds your beauty's overthrow.

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## WEEP YOU NO MORE, SAD FOUNTAINS

Weep you no more, sad fountains :  
What need you flow so fast ?  
Look how the snowy mountains  
Heaven's sun doth gently waste !  
But my Sun's heavenly eyes  
View not your weeping,  
That now lies sleeping  
Softly, now softly lies,  
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,  
A rest that peace begets :  
Doth not the sun rise smiling  
When fair at even he sets ?  
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes !  
Melt not in weeping !  
While she lies sleeping  
Softly, now softly lies,  
Sleeping.

Three other lyrics, selected from the various song-books of the period, may be included here, as representative of the songs which were being sung all over England at this time : " Shall a Frown or Angry Eye " (William Corkine's *Airs*), " Sister, Awake " (Thomas Bateson's *English Madrigals*), " Yet if His Majesty Our Sovereign Lord " (Christ Church MS.).

## SHALL A FROWN OR ANGRY EYE

Shall a frown or angry eye,  
Shall a word unfitly placed,  
Shall a shadow make me fie



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As if I were with tigers chased ?  
Love must not be so disgraced.

Shall I woo her in despite ?  
Shall I turn her from her flying ?  
Shall I tempt her with delight ?  
Shall I laugh at her denying ?  
No : beware of lovers' crying.

Shall I then with patient mind,  
Still attend her wayward pleasure ?  
Time will make her prove more kind,  
Let her coyness then take leisure :  
She is worthy such a treasure.

## SISTER, AWAKE

Sister, awake ! close not your eyes !  
The day her light discloses,  
And the bright morning doth arise  
Out of her bed of roses.

See the clear sun, the world's bright eye !  
In at our window peeping,  
Low, how he blushes to espy  
Us idle wenches sleeping.

Therefore awake ! make haste, I say,  
And let us, without staying,  
All in our gowns of green so gay  
Into the Park a-Maying.

## YET IF HIS MAJESTY, OUR SOVEREIGN LORD

Yet if His Majesty, our sovereign lord,  
Should of his own accord  
Friendly himself invite,  
And say, " I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"

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How should we stir ourselves, call and command  
All hands to work ! " Let no man idle stand.

" Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall,  
See they be fitted all ;  
Let there be room to eat,  
And order taken that there want no meat.  
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,  
That without tapers they may give a light.

" Look to the presence : are the carpets spread,  
The dazie o'er the head,  
The cushions on the chairs,  
And all the candles lighted on the stairs ?  
Perfume the chambers, and in any case  
Let each man give attendance in his place ! "

Thus, if the king were coming, would we do,  
And 'twere good reason too ;  
For 'tis a duteous thing  
To show all honour to an earthly king,  
And after all our travail and our cost,  
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of Heaven  
All's set at six and seven :  
We wallow in our sin,  
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.  
We entertain Him always like a stranger,  
And, as at first, still lodge Him in a manger.

## X

IT remains to sum up the characteristic qualities of the Elizabethan lyricist. He was not, as a rule, a man who made the writing of lyrics the chief business of his life. He was a statesman occupied with high affairs of State ;

## AND THEIR POETRY

a soldier, fighting his Queen's battles ; an adventurer, pushing his explorations into the wild unknown regions of land and sea ; an actor, bent on pleasing the motley crowd to whom he played ; a dramatist, his brain full of plots and situations and telling scenes ; an ambassador, a lawyer, a musician, a schoolmaster, a doctor of physic ; or perhaps, most arduous calling of all, he was a gentleman of fashion. " I confess," says Carlyle, " I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be *all* sorts of men. The poet who could merely sit on a chair and compose stanzas would never make a stanza worth much." If Carlyle had wanted illustrations in support of his theory, no age would have supplied them more liberally than the age of Elizabeth. The poets of that day could do much more than sit on a chair and write stanzas. They regarded the writing of stanzas, indeed, as a pastime, an occupation for the spare moments of a strenuous life. There were such great things to be done in that great era—the Spaniards to fight, the Queen to serve, colonies to be planted beyond the seas, a national drama to be built up, and, best of all, life to be enjoyed ; the writing of verse seemed a little thing beside all these.

In spite of all this variety of occupation and outward circumstances there is, in another sense, a strong family likeness between all the Elizabethan lyrists. If, for example, Sir Philip Sidney and Robert Greene had met somewhere—say, in the wilds of Ireland—we cannot imagine that

## THE ELIZABETHAN LYRISTS

they would have been long before they discovered that they had many things in common ; and a day's unbroken intimacy would have given each a sympathetic understanding of the other which would never have been lost. For the spirit which animated them was the same spirit. Sir Walter Scott speaks of the "wind of poetry that blew throughout that wonderful generation" ; and it does indeed seem that some such common influence was at work inspiring the singers, however different their lot in life might be.

Therefore it matters less than it might otherwise do that we know little of the authors of some of the lyrics, and nothing at all, not even the names, of the authors of others. For the unknown lyrists were children of their generation and united in spirit with all the other members of that company which made England, in Elizabeth's day, "a nest of singing birds."

# GLOSSARY

Age his alms, *the alms of old age*

Arrant, *errand*

Assays, *trials*

Bale, *borrow*

Balk, *a ridge of unploughed land between two fields*

Balmer, *embalmer*

Beadsman, *one who offers up prayers (A.S. biddan, to pray)*

Begilde, *beguiled*

Behove, *need, benefit*

Chough, *jackdaw*

Coney, *rabbit*

Cowch, *clutch*

Crisped, *rippling*

Cure, *care*

Dainty, *difficult*

Dazie, *canopy*

Deads one, *causes death to a person; dead was often used as a verb in Elizabethan English*

Division, *an elaborate variation for voice or instruments upon a single theme*

Estate, *state*

Fere, *companion*

Forced (or forst), *regarded, cared for*

Gittern, *a musical instrument resembling a guitar*

Gryphes, *griffins*

Lapped, *wrapped*

Mazer, *a drinking vessel*

Mean, *middle state*

Mings, *mingles*

Null, *will not*

Pheer, *companion*

Pie, *magpie*

Press, *throng*

Prick-song, *music of which the notes are written down, as opposed to extempore music; therefore usually richer and more varied, and so applied to the song of the nightingale*

Prime-feathered, *probably decked with morning dew-drops*

Quiristers, *choristers*

Rede, *knowledge*

Scallop-shell, *a shell which pilgrims to the Holy Land often wore in their hats*

Scrip, *writing*

Sithe, *season*

Soote, *sweet*

Sousing, *pouncing*

Spright, *spirit*

Stare, *starling*

Still, *ever*

# GLOSSARY

Suckets, *sweetmeats*

Trentals, *an office for the dead, consisting of thirty masses rehearsed for thirty days successively*

Unkist, *unkissed*

Uptill, *up to*

Weeds, *clothes*

Whan, *when*

Wroken, *wreaked*

Yfere *companions*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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